Fall of the Mughal Empire

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD VOLUME.

This volume carries the story of the Delhi monarchy from the entrance of Shah Alam II into his capital in 1772, through seventeen years of his rule, to the bloody tragedy of 1788 which turned the Mughal monarch into a mere shadow and transferred his government to a perpetual vicar, till another and still bloodier tragedy came seventy years later which struck out the very name of his dynasty from the pages of Time. Among the phantoms of the past that crowd the stage of this volume, the dominating figure is that of Mahadji Sindhia, as Ahmad Shah Abdali's was in the volume before it. The final assertion of Mahadji's supremacy over all the members of the Empire took place two years beyond the close of the present volume, but the importance of that political development and the vast and diversified mass of materials available for its study have prevented me from continuing the story to that point.

In fact, this third volume has taken twice the time of its immediate predecessor to write, because of the immensity, variety and confused character of the historical sources on which it is based. The dates of thousands of laconic Marathi despatches had to be ascertained, their obscurities cleared, and the textual reading and arrangement of the Persian manuscript sources had to be corrected, before a single page of my narrative could be composed. To give two

examples: the Persian news-letters collected by Claud Martin and now preserved in the British Museum in two volumes running to 1500 manuscript pages (*Or.* 25,020 and 25,021), do not except in the rarest cases give the year, and hence the owner has bound them by placing *all* the sheets of a particular month for these nine years lumped together in one place, in the order of the days of the month only! It is only after ploughing my way through these huge collections of reports and concentrating light on their contents from the three languages, Marathi, Persian and English, that I have been able to date and interpret this class of sources correctly.

Again, the invaluable memoirs of Faqir Khair-ud-din (the Persian secretary of the Anderson brothers, British Residents with Sindhia) run to a thousand pages of foolscap folio size in my manuscript. But this is a copy made from the Khuda Bakhsh manuscript, which itself was transcribed from a defective and wrongly arranged original, without its scribe or my scribe noticing these defects. It took me two months of work at the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal to collate my copy with the Society's manuscript, in which too several folios have been placed out of order at the time of binding!

During the same period the despatches of the British Residents, James Anderson, William Kirkpatrick, and William Palmer, from the remnant of the old Poona Residency archives, supplemented from the Imperial Records then housed in Calcutta, had to be collected, edited and printed by me for the

Government of Bombay, under the title of *Mahadji Sindhia and North Indian Affairs, 1785-1794.*

As a result of it, the reader can now see some light in this dense and tangled jungle of historical materials, and future workers in this field will, it is hoped, be saved from much distraction and loss of time by the minute references given by me for every personality and incident. A certain amount of repetition will be noticed in the narrative, but it has been deliberately made in order to keep the reader's eye fixed on the main currents of this history, amidst the distracting rapidity and confusion of political changes.

Unfortunately for the historian, the French captains have left no accounts of their romantic Indian careers. The very short memoirs of René Madec touch only the fringe of the subject and end as early as 1776. De Boigne lived for many years after returning from India, but from the cosy chair of his palace in Chambery he only talked to Grant Duff and Grant Duff has not played the Boswell to the veteran. Perron was a weaver's son who hated to touch a pen. Their Indian secretaries have left behind them letters only,—mere business papers and money accounts,—in Persian, but no regular history or even journal, like the priceless memoirs of Anderson's *munshi* Khair-ud-din. What would we not have paid for a volume of Indian recollections by De Boigne like the *Journal du Voyage du Bengale à Delhy* (1774-1776) written by the cultured aristocrat Comte de Modave, the nature of which can be judged

from the portion translated by me in *Bengal Past and Present.*

In the second volume the reader supped full of horrors; he saw one Emperor murdered, another deposed and blinded, and a third driven into exile and poverty for his very life. In the present volume no Pādishāh dies a violent death, but the only Emperor who fills the throne throughout meets with a fate which makes him cry for death by the assassin's hand as a welcome relief.

But with the close of this volume the succession of palace tragedies and camp assassinations also ends. Mahadji Sindhia's regency opened a period of peace and comparative prosperity for Delhi city and the districts that still acknowledged the authority of the Crown; military reorganisation of a new and efficient type was carried out and economic development fostered in the present United Provinces by French genius and industry. Except for domestic feuds, Malwa—and, in a lesser degree, Rajputana—began to know peace, till we reach the disintegration of Sindhia's Government under Daulat Rao at the end of the Eighteenth Century. These will form the theme of the concluding volume and the author is cheered by the prospect of bidding farewell to unrelieved bloodshed and treachery, and making his acquaintance with revenue and administration, agriculture and industry, social changes and cultural growth in a part of India not yet under British care.

12th November, 1938. JADUNATH SARKAR.

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on the imperial Government's fortunes at different stages. This makes it necessary for us to go back to the Jāt affairs after Jawāhir Singh's death and the Maratha activities during 1770 and 1771 which have been sketched in Chapters 22 and 25 in the barest outline necessary for serving as a preliminary to Shah Alam's restoration to Delhi.

§ 2. *Causes of the decline of the Jāt Power after Jawāhir Singh's death.*

When Jawāhir Singh's tempestuous career ended in an appropriately violent death (June 1768), his throne passed to his younger brother Ratan Singh. No enemy was then in sight; the spirited Rajah of Jaipur had died a few months before Jawāhir; the Marathas were too deeply involved in their own country to send any expedition to Hindustan, and even their local agents in Bundelkhand and North Malwa were hard put to it to hold their own; Delhi was a lordless city, the Emperor being a powerless pensioner of the English at Allahabad; Najib-ud-daulah was now a broken down invalid who had retired from active life to wait for his latter end in resignation. While the Jāt Rajah was thus at peace with his neighbours, the rebels and refractory vassals within his territory were promptly crushed by his European generals, Sombre and Madec. The treasury was fairly full; even the ceaseless warfare of Jawāhir Singh's reign and his buying of Maratha and Sikh aid for avenging his father's

blood at any cost, had not turned him insolvent, so vast had been the accumulations in the treasury of Bharatpur during the long and prudent reigns of Badan Singh and Suraj Mal.

The Jāt State, therefore, might well have looked forward to a long period of peaceful recuperation and progress. But a nation's greatest enemy is within, not without. Jawāhir Singh had established his royal autocracy by crushing out the old Jāt nobility whom even Badan Singh had spared and Suraj Mal had cherished and turned into his best lieutenants. But the young dictator who followed them on the throne, had in less than five years chopped off all the tall poppies in the land, and henceforth the life of the State depended solely on the wisdom and strength of one man. A simple warrior-tribe like the Jāts could flourish only under a succession of warrior kings, now that no martial baronage was left to supply the king's place at the head of the national levy and command the confidence of all the tribal brethren.

The Jāts, mostly ignorant peasantry, had not been able to adopt the European discipline and tactics which had now come to sway Indian warfare. This military weakness of their State was for a time concealed by their employment of two very able European mercenary captains, Walter Reinhard (popularly called Sombre or Samru) and René Madec. Of these Sombre cared only for money and was ever ready to desert to the

highest bidder, while Madec was lured away by his patriotic instinct, at the call of M. Chevalier the French Chief of Chandernagar, to transfer his services to the Emperor's Court at Delhi (Oct. 1772) and there serve as a French agent for building up coalitions against the British Power in Hindustan.

Brain and character alike were wanting among the successors of Jawāhir Singh, and, in addition, the lack of a strong man at the head of the State let loose all the selfishness and factious spirit among the other members of the royal family, which completed the national downfall in a few years.

§ 3. *Ratan Singh's reign and death: war for his succession.*

Ratan Singh had seen war at the head of a Jāt corps against the Marathas in Bundelkhand and North Malwa early in 1768; but immediately after coming to the throne he gave himself up entirely to pleasure and pomp. As the new lord of Brajamandal, he made a pilgrimage to Vrindāvan and held the grandest and most costly entertainments on the bank of the Jamunā, at which 4,000 dancing girls were assembled. He had picked up Gosain Rupānand, a Brahman monk reputed to be a master of alchemy, and engaged him to procure the Philosopher's stone. The sharper, after draining the Rajah of money for some time, at last found no other way of avoid-

ing punishment for his imposture than to murder his dupe during an experiment for the transmutation of metals in the privacy of his tent. He was instantly cut down by the Rajah's servants and "sent to Vishnu's heaven", while Ratan Singh lingered on for some hours (8 April, 1769). The leading Jāt general now surviving was Dān Shāh, the brother-in-law of Nawal Singh, and he was entrusted with the regency on behalf of Ratan Singh's infant son Kesari Singh.*

As the general-regent was not a man of the Jāt blood royal, but an outsider, it was easy for the late Rajah's brothers Nawal Singh and Ranjit Singh to spread the tale that he was going to use his absolute power for seizing the throne for himself. They thus united the other members of the royal family and the chief officers of the State in a plot for ousting him. As soon as Monsieur Madec, the chief supporter of Dān Shāh, had gone out to suppress some rebels in the provinces, the two brothers besieged the

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* The European evidence on Jat affairs supplied by Father F. X. Wendel stops just before the death of Jawahir Singh. But the loss is fully made good by the *Mémoire* of René Madec who joined the Jat service in July 1767 and left it in Oct. 1772. I.O.L. transcript of this *Mémoire* used by me in preference to the summary given in É. Barbé's book, *Le Nabab René Madec.*

Kesari Singh's name is rightly given in *CPC*. ii. 1389, but misspelt as Kheri S in 1499 (corrected in the index.) Jat history after Jawahir S.—*DC*. *CPC*. ii and iii. Madec. *SPD*. xxix. *Bayan* (brief.) *Chahar Gulzar*. *Ibratnamah*. G. Ali ii. 4.

regent in his mansion in Dig and forced him to capitulate on condition of exile from the country. Then the victors quarrelled over the division of power. Nawal Singh won over M. Madec and all the chief officers and made himself sole regent; his younger brother Ranjit Singh went back baffled to his appanage, the fort of Kumbher, which Nawal Singh then attacked. Ranjit in distress hired a band of Sikh mercenaries, rumoured to be 70,000 strong. Madec was now forced to raise the siege of Kumbher and hasten to meet this new enemy on the way. After an obstinate and long doubtful battle, the Sikhs were at last routed (*circa* 15 Feb. 1770). They retired 30 leagues from the field of combat and halted outside the Jāt frontier. Thence, on receiving a bribe from the agents of Nawal Singh, they marched away to their own country (end of February.)

§ 4. *Ranjit Singh Jāt hires the Marathas returned to the North.*

A new and more dangerous enemy was now drawn into the Jāt kingdom by this fratricidal contest. Before the end of the year 1769 the young Peshwa Madhav Rao had triumphed over his domestic enemies and asserted his mastery over the Government of Puna. He was now free to send his best generals to Hindustan for restoring Maratha prestige which had been eclipsed by the disaster of Panipat. The aims of this expedi-

tion were quite clear: namely to realise the war indemnity due from the Jāt kingdom according to the treaty of 26th May, 1754 (Ch. 12 § 5) and to recover the lands assigned by the Delhi Government during Imād-ul-mulk's wazirship as the price of Maratha armed help up to 1754 (Ch. 13 § 7.) Many of these lands had been usurped by the Jāts and the Ruhelas after Ahmad Shah's victory in the Panipat campaign.

The task set before the Maratha generals was a heavy one. The armed force which alone could have ensured its accomplishment required a large outlay for its initial equipment and maintenance. But the Puna Government was bankrupt; it was necessary for it to make war feed on war. The nearest and most solvent of its North Indian debtors was the Jāt Rajah. From the middle of 1767 to the first quarter of 1769, Jāt forces had been busy driving out Maratha posts in Bundelkhand and North Malwa in concert with the indigenous Rajput chiefs of that region and the Jāt ruler of Gohad. These troubles ceased only with the murder of Ratan Singh and the ensuing civil war. This gave the Marathas their long-coveted chance.

The Peshwa's generals in the North, after laying a large contribution on Mewar (September 1769), had gone away to besiege Rāghogarh in the Khechi country, and next taken post in Kerauli territory in order to dun the neighbouring State of Jaipur for its long-unpaid contribu-

tions. Here they were met by Ranjit Singh's envoy with a proposal to hire them for his defence, and they jumped at the invitation. A Maratha army estimated at 30,000 men with good field artillery marched to Kumbher, interviewed Ranjit Singh on 5th March, 1770, and encamped outside that fort. But "Ranjit Singh not having paid them the stipulated sum of money, they began ravaging and laying waste the dependencies of both chiefs without distinction. Nawal Singh was encamped with his forces under the walls of Dig, uncertain whether he should fight the Marathas or buy them off." [*CPC*. iii. 128, 161.] A month passed in this way, the Jāt army merely watching the enemy from a distance. [*SPD*. xxix. pp. 302-305.]

§ 5. *Battle of Sonkh-Aring, 6 April, 1770.*

Then a battle disastrous to Nawal Singh was precipitated by his folly on 6th April.* By that time the Marathas had exhausted the supplies in the open country near Dig and Kumbher and completed their alliance with Najib-ud-daulah, who had reached the Doab to join them. So, they set out for the Doab, sending their larger guns and baggage ahead under Tukoji Holkar to Mathura and following this vanguard in a strong body of cavalry with rockets and light pieces only.

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* Battle—Madec (best.) *CPC*. iii. 180, 184. *DC*. *SPD*. xxxvii. 210. Khare, iv. let. 970, 971.

Nawal Singh had challenged them before to a pitched battle, but on seeing them thus going away, he realised that his waiting game would only lead to the loss of his Doab possessions without a blow in their defence. He therefore promptly set out from Dig and followed the Marathas by a parallel route a few miles north of theirs. He had no clear plan of action, and not being a soldier himself wavered between one general's advice and another's.

On 6th April, the Jāt army moved out of Dig to Govardhan, nine miles eastwards, in several straggling bodies stretched out irregularly and without concert over the long road. No regiment was ready for fighting, large numbers of his soldiers had gone back to the city of Dig to fetch their necessaries, and detachments had been sent off to escort the baggage. Later in the day the Jāts sighted the Marathas drawn up in battle order and facing round towards them, some distance north-west of Sonkh, (a place midway between Kumbher and Mathura.) Nawal Singh held a council of war. Sombre and Madec urged him not to fight that day as his troops had not been fully assembled yet and there would not be sufficient daylight left for a regular action. But their advice was swept away by the vehemence of Dān Shāh, who had returned from his exile after organising the army of the deposed Nawab Qāsim Ali of Bengal. He could not let the Marathas slip away from under his eyes, without

making an attempt to crush them when deprived of their powerful artillery. Gosain Bālānand, the captain of the wild Nāgā monks, supported this policy. Nawal Singh, like all weak men, was led away by the most clamorous counsellor and ordered an attack.

The Jāt vanguard, composed of 2,000 chosen horsemen of the Bhadauria and other Rajput clans, led by Dān Shāh, galloped upon the Marathas and were met by a terrible fire of rockets and light artillery which brought down nearly the whole of their dense mass; the broken remnant took to flight. The action had begun so suddenly that no troops could be sent up to support this charge, which dissolved in nothing. Meantime, Madec had pushed back the left wing of the enemy, but men from their right promptly rode up to reinforce it, and he in his turn was attacked with such vigour and superior numbers that he could save himself only by forming his sepoys into a square and fighting on three faces at the same time.

The battle raged thus, irregularly but with intense fury till an hour before midnight. The Jāts, fighting without any plan or mutual concert, acknowledged defeat only after Nawal Singh himself had fled away from the field.* His soldiers

* "After two hours' close engagement, Nawal Singh was obliged to retreat within the lines of Samru, who had formed a square . . . and had for a long time sustained

rushed back in disorder, breaking Madec's square in the wild sweep of their flight. That French captain with only 5 or 6 horsemen escaped to safety through the Maratha ranks under cover of darkness.

It was a long-drawn and most obstinate battle. The Jāts, with the inglorious exception of their master, fought with the desperate courage for which these peasant-warriors have always been famous. The Marathas lost a thousand to twelve hundred men in killed and wounded and eight hundred horses slain. But their victory was complete. The Jāt field army ceased to exist as the result of a single afternoon's action. "It is computed that 2,000 of their soldiers were killed and 500 [? 5,000] wounded. All their artillery (40 pieces) was left on the field, except two light pieces which Samru had brought off."

Two thousand Jāt horses and thirteen elephants were captured. Madec's corps alone lost 1,400 men in killed and wounded, with its horses, camels, elephants, arms and artillery; its sole remnant consisted of the wounded and his camp-guard left behind in Dig. Still heavier was the loss among the Jāt leaders. "Never was a greater number of sardārs killed and wounded in

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repeated shocks of the enemy. Finding himself in a tight corner, Nawal Singh threw away his ornaments lest he should be recognised by the enemy, and with a few attendants reached the fort [of Aring] in safety." *CPC.* ii. 184, also *DC.*

a matter of public notoriety in every camp bazar and came to be reported in the news-letters to the English Company, the Delhi Government and the Peshwa alike. The grouping of the mutually wrangling chiefs changed with bewildering variety for a year and a half and was ended only by the Peshwa's recalling Ramchandra Ganesh (middle of 1771) ; but even after that date the old discord cropped up again in the form of an irreconcilable antagonism between Sindhia and Holkar as to the attitude to be observed towards the Emperor and Zābita Khan. In fact, the new Maratha enterprise for undoing the work of Panipat was foredoomed to failure, because the Peshwa could spare no member of his family like Raghunāth Dādā or Sadāshiv Bhāu to lead it with unquestioned authority and dominating rank.

§ 7. *Conflict of policy in the Maratha camp : Sindhia versus Holkar.*

From the very beginning Ramchandra failed to impose his will on his associates. Even before their start from Kerauli Māhādji had left him in a huff and moved towards Mārwar, because he could not agree with Ramchandra, and the latter had to depute Ganoji Kadam to mollify Sindhia and bring him back (January 1770.) The victory over the Jāt Rajah (6th April) caused the old sore to break open in an aggravated form ; now began a sharp and irreconcilable conflict of public policy as distinct from a personal quarrel. The

question was, what should the Marathas do next? Should they wait in the Jāt country, starve Nawal Singh out of his stronghold,—it may be, after months of blockade,—and thus realise the tribute due from him, before proceeding to the recovery of their Doab possessions and lost power at the Delhi Court? Or, should they leave the Jāt issue unsettled and hasten to the Doab for reconquering it with the help of Najib-ud-daulah before the coming of the rainy season put a stop to campaigning for four months and forced their vast army to eat its bread in idleness? [*SPD.* xxix. 252.]

Māhādji Sindhia, apart from the blood feud that he bore to Najib, instinctively perceived that this Ruhela chief was the one enemy of the Marathas in the North,—great in his military genius and resources, and greater still in his political insight and diplomatic suppleness. He, therefore, proposed that the victorious Marathas should promptly come to terms with Nawal Singh by accepting a moderate money indemnity, leave a friendly Jāt Rajah in their rear, and march into the Doab for wresting their jagirs there by force from the Ruhela and Bangash usurpers, especially for punishing Najib, the arch-Ruhela and the moving spring of all anti-Maratha combinations among the Afghans of the North, now that his Durrani patron was unable to come to his aid.

Ramchandra Ganesh advocated exactly the opposite policy: the Jāt Rajah having been effectually crushed, he could be safely left behind to be squeezed by Maratha tribute-collectors with exorbitant demands, and the Maratha army should enter the Doab in alliance with Najib, wrest all the Jāt possessions there by this combined Maratha-Ruhela attack and share them with Najib. He was reluctant to face a long and costly campaign by attacking Najib, who was sure to be supported by the Bangash, the trans-Ganges Ruhelas and the Nawab of Oudh. The dreaded spectre of a pan-Muslim coalition against the returned Marathas, like the one which had triumphed in the Panipat campaign, cowed his spirit. As he told his colleagues, "We have come here after ten years, and if we do not first make friends with Najib, then all would join him against us, and with such a combination of enemies opposing us we shall have to fight a hard fight, the result of which no man can foresee." Tukoji Holkar was the hereditary rival of the house of Sindhia. Najib's very astute Hindu agents visited him, and by bribing his ministers induced them to persuade their young master to follow Malhar's policy of always backing Najib's interests in the inner council of the Maratha leaders. The Peshwa approved of Ramchandra Ganesh's plan, and about the 24th of April the Maratha army began to cross into the Doab. [*SPD.* xxix. 254-262, 246, p. 307.]

In less than three months the result declared itself and proved that Mahadji Sindhia was the better prophet. No doubt, the Marathas took some Jāt villages, but none of their former lawful domains in that region was released by Ahmad Bangash or Hafiz Rahmat or even by Najib himself, and not a pice of compensation or tribute was paid by them. These Afghans frankly told the Maratha envoy, "We are soldiers, we do not surrender lands unless compelled by superior force." [*SPD.* xxvii. 214.] Thus the hoped-for smooth recovery of jagirs and collection of money through Najib's friendly persuasion came to nothing, as Māhādji had foreseen. The faithless chief of Najibabad kept the Marathas deluded by his smooth talk, wasted months in hollow negotiations, and opened a secret correspondence for uniting all the enemies of the Marathas in that province in order to defeat their enterprise. He achieved a masterly triumph of diplomacy for the remainder of his life, and the Southern chiefs were completely befooled. It was only after his death that the Marathas by going to war with the Afghans won back any of their former possessions in the Doab. Thus once again in Maratha history, a Holkar had ruined the national cause in the North by his selfishness and personal jealousy. We shall now see in detail how the events moved on these lines during the third Maratha penetration into Hindustan.

§ 8. *How the leaders' disputes ruined the Maratha interests.*

When, after the victory over Nawal Singh (6th April, 1770), the Marathas arrived on the west bank of the Jamuna near Mathura, they found that Najib-ud-daulah had reached the east bank, for they had before this opened negotiations with him and he had marched out of his home in order to co-operate with them. Envoys passed and repassed over the river for some days, confirming the alliance and giving pledges of safe conduct, and the principals on the two sides exchanged visits in their tents.

On 25th April first Tukoji and then Ramchandra Ganesh crossed over to the east bank, and Māhādji Sindhia two days later. They encamped close to Najib's camp. Meantime a Jāt force had crossed the river higher up for defending the Doab. But it was of no avail; the allies swept everything before them, the leaderless Jāts making no defence against such odds. Some twenty villages of parganahs Shukohabad, Sa'adabad &c. were wrested from their Jāt administrators by Najib and placed under his own collectors and troops (early in May.) The Marathas, too, seized some other places and their roving Pindharis looted many more, ravaging the entire district. Soon afterwards a rupture took place between the allies. Najib, either fearing treachery from Māhādji or believing in the false

accusations of Tukoji Holkar, marched away from the vicinity of his doubtful friends (10th May) towards Aligarh.

Meantime the ex-wazir Ghāziuddin Imād-ul-mulk had come unasked from his asylum at Farrukhabad to Agra (*c.* 4 May), where he was visited by the Maratha chiefs with due honour. Then he forced himself as an unbidden guest on Sindhia's camp. This introduced a fresh complication into Maratha affairs in the North, because their reception of the mortal enemy of the house of Alamgir II at once filled Shah Alam with the suspicion that they were planning to set up some other prince on the throne and govern the Empire through Ghāzi-ud-din as his wazir. This incident also antagonised Shujā and the English towards the Marathas. But the Marathas had not really formed any plot with him against Shah Alam ; they were merely wavering, uncertain what to do in the changed political situation of Delhi since their last visit in 1760. [*DC. CPC.* iii. 216. *SPD.* xxix. 260, pp. 307-310.]

The discord among the Maratha leaders and its fatal effect on their enterprise are well illustrated in the despatches sent to the Peshwa from the spot. As early as 4th May, Nāro Narsi wrote that Sindhia and Holkar were advocating diametrically opposite policies regarding the Jāt Rajah, with the result that Maratha diplomacy

had failed in dealing with all the local Powers, great and small, and their main design was defeated, while the rainy season which would enforce inaction on them was fast approaching. A later despatch (written on the 17th) informed the Peshwa, "Sindhia is for accepting the indemnity offered by the Jāt Rajah, Holkar is against it. Our sardārs are daily quarrelling ; they are not on speaking terms with one another. Three sardārs are present here, and yet not a pice has been realised."

The party led by Holkar raised the demand on Nawal Singh to eighty lakhs of Rupees! At the end of May the Jat envoy rose to 65 lakhs, which the Maratha chiefs agreed to accept ; but the higgling continued about the amounts and dates of the instalments, and the Jat demand that 20 lakhs out of this sum should be written off as compensation for the damage recently done to their lands and tenants by the Maratha-Ruhela forces. The Marathas rejected the new Jat proposal and resumed the seizure of their villages in the Doab, which did not bring the payment of the indemnity any nearer. These negotiations dragged on for months without any agreement. As Nāro Narsi wrote, "So long as the water level of the Ganges and the Jamuna was low the Jats carried on their parleys, but when the rivers were flooded their negotiations fell into delay." [*SPD.* xxvii. 214, xxiv. 246, 255—260.]

§ 9. *Maratha demands on the Bangash and the Ruhelas.*

Towards the end of May a Maratha detachment raided the Bangash territory in Farrukhabad. At the end of June, a force from Kālpi, led by Bālāji and Gangādhar (the sons of Govind Pant Bundélé) crossed the Jamuna at the invitation of some local zamindars and invaded the Etawa district from the south, capturing a number of villages (such as Auriya) from the local Ruhela collectors. [*CPC.* iii. 255, 307.]

The monsoon now set in with full vigour. Ramchandra Ganesh brought together all his forces for cantoning in the Aligarh district. Up to this time though "the Jat territory had been totally devastated, no indemnity money had been paid." But the interception of a secret letter from Najib to Hāfiz Rahmat and other trans-Ganges Ruhelas betrayed their intrigue for treacherously foiling the Maratha designs by spinning out feigned parleys, precipitated matters, and drove Ramchandra Ganesh to close with Nawal Singh's offer. The Jat indemnity was fixed at 65 lakhs payable in three years, besides an annual tribute of eleven lakhs which would commence in the fourth year after the 65 lakhs had been fully discharged. Ranjit Singh was to be provided for by an appanage yielding 25 lakhs a year. A treaty to this effect was signed by the two parties and on 10th July Ramchandra's diwan

started for the Jat capital to collect the first instalment. [*SPD.* xxix. 262, 246. xxvii. 214. *CPC.* iii. 323, 445.]

Envoys from the three Maratha chiefs then set out for the seats of the trans-Ganges Ruhelas to demand the restitution of the Maratha jagirs they had usurped during Abdali's invasion ten years ago. They refused to yield an inch of land unless the Marathas first succeeded in making Najib-ud-daulah disgorge what he had seized in the Mirat and Saharanpur districts of the Upper Doab. The baffled envoys returned, but nothing could be done before the end of the rains. As Nāro Narsi wrote to the Peshwa on 18th August, "Your troops have nothing to eat. Up till now we have carried on by borrowing 5 to 7 lakhs of Rupees. But no further loan is procurable . . . No tribute has been realised by us. All the Rajputs are watching to see what success attends our efforts to get money from the Jat Rajah." [*SPD.* xxix. 246, xxvii. 214.]

At last the bewildered Maratha chiefs took counsel with Najib-ud-daulah again. That Ruhela, whose shrewd policy had completely triumphed in the Doab and baffled the Marathas, now played another masterly stroke and succeeded in diverting the Maratha forces from the Bangash and Ruhela territories to the Jat possessions near Delhi. He told them, "So long as you cannot exact any indemnity from the Jat Rajah, you will not get a pice from the Doab. Therefore, you

should detach ten thousand men from here. They will be joined by my 5,000 troops now in Delhi, and the two together will annex all the Jat territory near Delhi and drive the Jat so hard that he will perforce make peace by paying the money." [*SPD*. xxix. 246.]

So, on 29th August, a Maratha force of 5,000 horse moved north towards the Ganges, but stopped soon, as the season did not yet permit any campaigning over long distances. During their enforced halt, Najib feeling the approach of death, settled the indemnity with the Jat envoys in private (*c*. 28 September) and publicly with the Maratha chiefs on 8th October in a darbar held day and night. Then he gave the Maratha generals their *congee,* sending his son Zābita khan in their company, and himself set out for his home, only to die on the way at Hāpur on the last day of the month. [*DC*.]

§ 10. *Progress of Maratha arms after Najibuddaulah's death.*

On the death of Najib-ud-daulah a new scene opened and Maratha policy underwent a complete change. Freed at last from the malign influence which had hypnotised all their chiefs except the clear-sighted Māhādji Sindhia for the last seven months, Maratha enterprise in Hindustan rapidly achieved a series of brilliant successes with the most far-reaching consequences.

In the second half of November the Marathas spread, ravaging the districts of Etawa, Shukoh-abad and Qanauj. Ahmad Khan Bangash was prepared to buy them off, but Hāfiz Rahmat urged that it was better to fight than to pay. The Marathas continued recovering many places in the Doab from the Afghan hands. At the beginning of the next month Ramchandra Ganesh laid siege to Etawa, which had been taken away by the Ruhelas from the Peshwa's agents just before Panipat. This fort was now held by Kabir Khan, on behalf of Hāfiz Rahmat. After a fortnight Kabir found resistance useless as there was no hope of succour. On 15th December he vacated the fort on being granted his life and property; at noon the Peshwa's standard was hoisted on the ramparts and a Maratha garrison put in. [*CPC*. iii. 505, 517, 530. *SPD*. xxix. pp. 311-313, Shaikh Kabir is paid Rs. 50,000 as the price of the grain and stores in the fort as well as the arrears of his *sebandi* troops.]

This close approach of the Marathas to the frontier of the district of Kora excited great alarm at the Court of Lucknow. Shuja-ud-daulah sent his son with a strong force, including Umrao-gir's Gosain corps, to the frontier post of Cawnpur by way of precaution, and wrote urging the English Governor to move up a body of their own troops from Patna to the Kora district in support (early in January 1771); and some time later he himself arrived at Cawnpur. The alarm

spread even to the English city of Patna. [*CPC.* iii. 562, 564, 577.]

But the Maratha leaders' attention was now diverted to the north,—to the Bangash principality and Delhi. At first Ghāzi-ud-din Imād-ul-mulk, the ex-wazir, arranged a treaty between the two parties ; Ahmad Bangash, Hāfiz Rahmat and Dundi Khan agreed to pay 22 lakhs in the course of three years, in full satisfaction of the claim for the revenue of the Maratha territories in the Upper Doab that they had enjoyed for these ten years. Holkar tore up the treaty and demanded the expulsion of Ghāzi-ud-din and war with the Afghans. So, Ghāzi-ud-din retired in disgust to Ajmir. Early in January 1771 a clash was precipitated between a large roving band of Maratha raiders near Farrukhabad and the Ruhelas, who rushed out to attack them, killing many of the plunderers and routing the rest. Hāfiz sent a large force to strengthen the defence of Farrukhabad. Then the Marathas resumed their negotiations, because they had been further weakened by the hopeless divisions among their leaders. [*CPC.* iii. 571.]

§ 11. *Renewed quarrel between Sindhia and Holkar : failure and discredit of Ramchandra Ganesh.*

After the death of Najib-ud-daulah the quarrel between Sindhia and Holkar broke out afresh over the question of the attitude to be

adopted by the Marathas towards Zābita Khan. Visāji Krishna (with the support of Sindhia) demanded from him a fee of 25 lakhs of Rupees for succession to his late father's post of Mir Bakhshi, as Najib was known to have been the richest noble in India after the Jat Rajah, while the Marathas were starving and overwhelmed with debt as the result of their futile Doab campaign. Holkar backed Zābita and pledged himself to get the Ruhela acknowledged by the Emperor as Mir Bakhshi without his having to pay anything to the Peshwa. Zābita, therefore, scornfully rejected Visāji's demand. Then Visāji and his party sent an ultimatum to Tukoji to expel Zābita from his camp. [*CPC.* iii. 571, 605, 614.]

It was Ahmad Khan Bangash's ambition to be appointed Mir Bakhshi through Maratha patronage, if only Zābita could be denied that high office, and he therefore continued bidding higher and higher for Maratha favour* through his pensioner Ghāzi-ud-din (who had influence over Sindhia). At the beginning of January Tukoji had prevented a settlement being made with Ahmad and Hāfiz Rahmat; but by the 26th

* As a news-letter from the Doab reported, "All the officers of the Maratha army are Visāji's friends and they consider Ramchandra Ganesh a fool. All this is due to the instigation of Mahadji Sindhia. Visāji and Mahadji wish to make Ahmad Khan Bangash Mir Bakhshi, for he has promised them a sum of money." [*CPC.* iii. 605.]

of that month he had been overruled, and peace was made on condition of the Bangash paying 10 lakhs and Hāfiz Rahmat 22 lakhs. [*SPD.* xxix. p. 313.]

Ramchandra Ganesh, the nominal head of the Marathas in Hindustan, "was disgusted with these machinations" and cross-currents of intrigue in his own camp ; he felt that all power had slipped out of his hands into those of Visāji allied to Māhādji. So, in "extreme dejection" he determined (*c.* 26 January 1771) to march back alone to the Deccan, taking his own contigent of Household Cavalry (*huzurāt pathkā*) with him. But a compromise was effected and he was prevailed upon to stay. The Maratha council of war now decided to march out of the Farrukhabad territory to Delhi, take possession of the capital, and "there establish either Ghāzi-ud-din or Ahmad Khan or anybody else who would give them money." The utter failure of Maratha war and diplomacy in the Doab in 1770 proved that Holkar's policy (endorsed by Ramchandra Ganesh) of working hand in glove with the arch-deceiver Najib, was an utter folly and that Mahadji Sindhia who had advocated the opposite policy had truer political vision. Tukoji and Ramchandra were utterly discredited in the eyes of their colleagues and master. Sindhia's counsels henceforth triumphed and, in close concert with Visāji, he took charge of the guidance of Maratha affairs ; Visāji mounted to the supreme command

on the crest of the rising wave of national success and these two confederates' triumph in capturing Delhi (10 Feb. 1771) confirmed his promotion by securing the Peshwa's assent to the supersession and recall of Ramchandra Ganesh. The ejection of Zābita Khan from their league, the check to that eternal marplot Tukoji Holkar, and the paralysing of Ramchandra Ganesh, "whom all the officers of the army considered a fool," gave an unwonted unity and vigour to Maratha policy from this date (27th January) onwards, and striking successes were achieved in consequence. [*CPC*. iii. 605.]

§ 12. *The Marathas capture Delhi and escort the Emperor to his capital.*

This brings us to the Maratha relations with the imperial exile at Allahabad. On 20th December 1770, Shah Alam from his Court in that fort sent Saifuddin Muhammad Khan as his envoy to the Maratha chiefs to hire their armed aid in restoring him to Delhi, as the recent death of Najib-ud-daulah had made the possession of Delhi a pressing issue. His heir Jawan Bakht and mother Zinat Mahal lived in the imperial capital, which was guarded by a contingent of Zābita Khan's troops (about 3000 strong), while Zābita himself with a division of the Maratha army under Holkar was then occupying the districts round Delhi in the Emperor's name, as in his father's time. The Marathas now held the

key to the control of the Delhi Government, as Najib was dead, Ahmad Shah Durrani was dying and hopelessly entangled in his own dominions, Zābita Khan was an inexperienced youth, and Dundi Khan was stricken down with paralysis.

While the future was looking quite dark to Shah Alam and his inner council in their ignorance as to whom the Marathas would declare as Mir Bakhshi or even crown as Emperor, Mahadji Sindhia had sent a secret letter to him professing sincere devotion to his cause and offering to escort him to Delhi if his expenses were paid. The reply was the despatch of Saifuddin Muhammad from Allahabad to the Maratha camp. A bargain was ultimately struck, though there was a hitch in the interval due to Sindhia's recall of Ghāzi-ud-din, the unpardonable enemy of the Emperor, from Ajmir to his camp.

Then, leaving the environs of Farrukhabad (about 27th January 1771), the Maratha host marched by way of Mainpuri, Shukohabad and Aligarh to Patparganj opposite Delhi (5th Feb.), after looting and burning Sikandrabad on the way (*c.* 2nd Feb.). On Thursday, 7th February, Saifuddin left the Maratha camp, forded the Jamuna, caused the Delhi Gate of the capital to be opened, assured the citizens that they had now nothing to fear from the Marathas, and going to the Jāmi Masjid made Musavi Khan Baluch's brother, then in charge of the city on behalf of Zābita Khan, proclaim Shah Alam, and

demanded the surrender of the fort. Under orders of the Queen Mother, Qāsim Ali (Zābita's *qiladar*) refused to deliver it and opened fire from the walls in defence. The resistance of the masterless citadel was futile. A short bombardment by the Maratha guns made a breach in the Asad Burj and soon brought the qiladar down on his knees; he made terms for a peaceful surrender* at noon on the 9th. Early in the morning of the tenth, Bālā Rao Govind, an officer of Sindhia, entered the fort, posted his own troops in charge of its ramparts, and expelled Zābita Khan's garrison. A Maratha contingent of 5000 horse occupied the city.

Visāji was appointed by the Crown Prince collector of the districts round Delhi, especially to the north, which Najib had so long appropriated to himself. Sindhia and Visāji now† became all in all in the counsels of the Prince and at his Court. What were the victors to do next? Their most pressing need was money. The Heir and the Queen Mother were really powerless. So, negotiations were opened (12th

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* *CPC.* iii. 605-665. *DC. SPD.* xxix. 265. Shaikh Qāsim the qiladar was paid Rs. 11,000 by Bala Rao, probably as the salary of his *sebandi* troops. (*Ibid*, p. 314.)

† Holkar kept himself at a distance, and his ally Ramchandra Ganesh sulked in aloofness at being completely eclipsed by his rival. On 26th April a proclamation was read that the Peshwa had appointed Visāji as leader of the Marathas *vice* Ramchandra recalled. *DC.*

March) with the Emperor through the Crown Prince, for bringing Shah Alam back to Delhi at the head of a Maratha force and restoring the fort to his officers, in return for 25 lakhs as expenses and the cession of Mirat and some other districts, besides giving the Maratha chiefs the right to appoint all imperial officials below the wazir and take half the *nazar* paid by the newly appointed functionaries.

The Emperor now prepared for marching out of Allahabad to Delhi, which the Marathas had agreed to hand over to him in return for the promised subsidy. On receiving the first instalment of it, they delivered possession of the fort to his agent on 2nd August. In the course of his march to Delhi the Emperor arrived near Farrukhabad, and demanded a succession fee or tribute from the son of Ahmad Khan Bangash who had recently died. But Fakhr-ud-daulah, the chief minister of the Bangash Government, assembled thousands of Afghans from the country around and made preparations for war. The Emperor called Māhādji Sindhia to his aid. Sindhia with a vast force of horsemen and artillery made a rapid march to that side. But when he arrived at Marhera, Fakhr-ud-daulah, in terror of the Maratha arms, at once yielded and made peace with the Emperor. Mahadji retraced his steps from Marhera, disappointed in his expectation of rich booty from Farrukhabad, but he made no complaint as "he had lofty ambitions

about the future." [*Ibratnamah*, i. 200.] On 18th November he waited on the Emperor at Nabiganj and formed his escort to Delhi, which was entered on 6th January, 1772.*

§ 13. *Visāji Krishna triumphant; Ramchandra Ganesh dismissed, his later history.*

We shall here complete the story of the Maratha dissensions in the North. The news of the capture of Delhi on 10th February 1771 caused the wildest exultation at the Court of Punā. It recalled to the memory the capture of the same imperial city by the Bhāu on 2nd August 1760, and was popularly believed to have undone the work of Panipat. The credit of this "great achievement" was given to Visāji and Sindhia. On 26th April, the Peshwa's orders were received at Delhi appointing Visāji Krishna to the command of the Maratha forces in Hindustan, supplanting Ramchandra Ganesh. That fallen chief set out from the environs of Delhi, in the deepest humiliation, for the Deccan. But Holkar and Sindhia sent some of their highest officers to intercept him at Faridabad and induce him to come back. To them he replied, "I have no quarrel with Sindhia or Holkar. I am going away to the Deccan because Visāji has not given me the Peshwa's letter. He is sending me off after lowering my

* *DC. CPC.* iii. 695, 717, 812, 828, 888, 895, 987. *SPD.* xxix. 89; pp. 317-321. *Aiti. Charitren,* iv. p. 111.

position, and I can therefore return only if these two generals and Visāji come here and personally entreat me to go back." This was done, after he had proceeded to Palwal.

At this turn of affairs, Visāji grew angry and left Delhi with the Household Cavalry of his master, crossing the Jamuna and going to Ghaziabad (*c.* 22 May, 1771.) Thus a new twist was given to the Maratha puzzle and their leaders assumed a new grouping. Visāji Krishna stood out in absolute isolation, while Sindhia and Holkar allied themselves with Ramchandra Ganesh. As the Peshwa's agent wrote from Visāji's camp, "Our domestic dissensions have been made manifest to the public. Visāji has broken with both the Maratha-caste sardars and gone off abandoning the control of Delhi. His antagonism to them for the sake of Ramchandra is ruining our plans. People are saying that unless the two Maratha-caste sardars support him, nothing undertaken by Visāji can succeed."* Mahadji and Tukoji wanted to give the supreme command of the army in Hindustan to Ramchandra once again, but Visāji kept firm hold of Delhi fort and sent his correspondence with his rival to the Peshwa for his orders.

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* *SPD.* xxix. 265, 266, 268, 269, 272. *DC. CPC.* iii. 810, 812.

The Peshwa's reply was a stern reprimand to the two sardars for violating his previous order about superseding Ramchandra Ganesh. So, Visāji was confirmed in his office, and is henceforth designated in the Persian records of the time by the curious title of "Peshwa" *i.e., the* supreme chief of the Marathas in the North.

Poor Ramchandra Ganesh, after being flouted and beaten to and fro like a shuttlecock, at last left Delhi for the Deccan (10th September 1771). A body of silahdar cavalry had been seduced by him from obedience to his successor and these men lingered in Sitaram's Sarai (outside Delhi) for some months after, but were paid their arrears of salary and won over in April 1772.

Visāji Krishna now became the head of the Maratha forces in Hindustan without a rival. But he was too weak a man to enforce obedience on Sindhia and Holkar, or to unite them in the national cause. Henceforth Maratha policy in the North parted into two irreconcilable paths, Sindhia and Holkar each took his own line regardless of the other's, and no joint enterprise for the common interest of the nation was possible. Briefly put, henceforth Sindhia by acting individually and secretly wormed himself into the Emperor's confidence. Holkar, on the other hand, antagonised Shah Alam by supporting Zābita Khan with demonstration of force, while

Visaji Krishna cared only to get possession of the region north of Delhi for himself.*

After returning to Punā, Ramchandra Ganesh tried to show his resentment at his supersession and to throw public odium on his master, by following the Muslim trick of "turning faqir." He stripped himself naked, with only a towel tightly drapped round his waist, took a beggar's bowl in his hand like a *sannyasi,* and went through the streets of Puna for two days, making a parade of begging alms of grain from the citizens, who were more amused than shocked by this mummery (July 1772. Khare, iv. 1904.) The Peshwa sternly forbade him to make a fool of himself in public. Ramchandra long kept up the hope that another turn of Fortune's wheel would overthrow Visāji Krishna, whose place in Delhi he would then get. But Madhav Rao's death that November and the murder of his successor ten months later, dashed all his hopes to the ground. Visāji Krishna amassed a fortune in the North, which he devoted to the cause of his patron Raghunāth Dādā in the war for the Peshwaship that began in 1774.

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* At Pānipat, in the temple enclosure outside the city, there is a small temple with a Persian inscription stating that it was built by Visāji's son Mahipat. In a neighbouring temple a beautiful piece of sculpture representing the purely Maratha god Dattātreya has been preserved.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DELHI AFFAIRS AND RUHELA CAMPAIGNS, 1772-1773.

§ 1. *The tasks before the restored Shah Alam.*

When the Sun first rose over Delhi after Shah Alam's entry into the capital as Emperor, it beheld a scene of universal rejoicing, because this was the first day of the blessed month of Shawwāl. The thirty days of fasting and prayer had come to an end, and the *Id* festivities were taking place in every mosque, public square and private house. But, besides this happy coincidence, the citizens of all classes expected a new time of prosperity from the return of the Government and the pomp and expenditure inseparable from the residence of the Sovereign and the nobility in their midst. The twelve years of decay depopulation poverty and humiliation borne by the imperial city during her master's exile were over, and Delhi might now proudly raise her head once more as the metropolis of India.

But the Emperor was in no position then to fulfil these expectations. Indeed, he did not as yet know how to subsist himself. His treasury was empty, his Crownlands were gone out of his possession, his palaces were stripped of their furniture, all the royal stores exhausted long ago,

the public buildings were out of repair and even the fort walls were cracked. To add to his burdens, he had run into heavy debt and let the pay of his troops fall into arrears by maintaining a large force during the past ten months for escorting him to Delhi ; and over everything else hung the dark cloud of the large subsidy promised to the Marathas for their recent military aid and still unpaid. The task before Shah Alam II in January 1772 was nothing less than the reconquest of a dismembered empire with an empty treasury and in the teeth of powerful usurpers who were entrenched in their provinces by long years of possession and formidable for their veteran armies, well filled treasuries and the prestige of past victories.

§ 2. *The ministers of the Delhi Government.*

For this task what instruments did the young Emperor see around himself? The former wazir Ghāzi-ud-din Imād-ul-mulk was impossible ; the new wazir Shuja-ud-daulah was a perpetual absentee bent solely on raising his fief into a kingdom. No other minister of a sufficient age or experience was within sight. The highest of the courtiers that had gathered round him during his last twelve years' wanderings and exile were Munir-ud-daulah, Saifuddin Muhammad Khan, and Hisām-ud-daulah,—mere diplomats, but neither soldiers nor administrators. They were polished ambassadors for making good terms with

the English or the Marathas, but not statesmen of the calibre needed for restoring a fallen monarchy. Hence they naturally came to be eliminated after the return of the Court to Delhi.

But in the Court of the restored monarch there were two persons of a humbler station than these, who were destined to be the supreme leaders of the State in the coming years and whose long-smouldering rivalry was the greatest misfortune of the Empire and the severest condemnation of Shah Alam's capacity as a ruler of men. These were Mirzā Najaf Khan and Abdul Ahad Khan. During the eleven years that followed Shah Alam's return of Delhi, one person gradually but unmistakably established himself by sheer merit as the supreme guide of the State and the sole dominating figure on the political stage. He was the last notable statesman-warrior that managed the affairs of the Delhi Government before the Emperor became a shadowy puppet and the Empire a mere name. He was the last of the great gifts of Persia to mediæval India. It would have been happier for the country and happier far for the Emperor himself if Najaf Khan's ability had been more promptly recognised instead of his having to wrestle with unworthy rivals for eight years out of these eleven, and if his life had run to the normal span of a man's days on earth instead of being cut off at the age of forty-five.

§ 3. *Mirza Najaf Khan, his past history.*

Mirzā Najaf Khan* was sprung from a noble Persian family of which the head had the hereditary custody of the key to the sepulchre of the most venerated Imām Ali-al-Rizā at Meshed and more than one member of which had married daughters of the Safavi kings. Najaf was born at Isfahān in 1737, and as a boy migrated to India with his sister who was married to Mirzā Muhasan, the eldest brother of Safdar Jang. He first saw service under this lady's step-son Muhammad Quli Khan (popularly called Mirzā Kuchak), who had been appointed imperial keeper of Allahabad fort. But that fort was usurped (April 1759) and Muhammad Quli was imprisoned and murdered (January 1761) by his jealous first cousin Shujā-ud-daulah. Young Najaf Khan, fearing to be involved in the ruin of his nephew and patron, fled away from Shujā with his bare life to Bengal, where the Nawāb Qāsim Ali Khan enlisted him and gave him three lakhs of Rupees for raising a force. In this Nawāb's service, Najaf Khan with his contingent joined the Bengal army at UndhuāNālā (August 1763), shook off their lethargy and greatly distinguished himself by raiding Mir Jafar's trenches. He next followed the

* *Imad-us-sādat*, 108-109, 29. *Siyar*, ii. 317-327, iii. 89. *Ibrat*. i. 119, 149-178. Muna Lal, 87, 106, 127. Broome, 381, 502-531& *CPC*. i. 2342-2688. ii. 840. iii. 112, 164, 830. iv. 473.

defeated Qasim Ali to Bundelkhand in the expedition undertaken by Shujā's orders for realising tribute from Rajah Hindupat. When Qāsim Ali returned from this expedition, Najaf remained in that province in the pay of different Bundela princes, fighting in their intestine contests. Shujā wrote inviting him to come over with his forces and join in his war with the English. The English generals, Munro and Carnac, too, from the middle of 1764 continued to send him tempting offers to desert Shuja's cause and even to make a treacherous attack upon that Nawāb. Najaf waited till the battle of Buxar (October 1764) and the continuous flight of Shujā had proved to the Indian world that the English were the winning side.

He now made a rapid march from Bāndā and joined the English camp before Allahabad (January 1765), after plundering the local revenue-collectors and merchants on the way and seizing Himmat Bahadur's treasure, horses, tents and other equipment in Achalgarh for himself. His local knowledge of Allahabad where he had served in Muhammad Quli's time, enabled him to point out the weak spots of the fort and thus helped the English to capture it quickly (11 February 1765.) He next accompanied Fletcher in the fights with Malhar Rao Holkar (May) and daily rose higher in the favour of the English. His adhesion supplied the English army with that arm which it had hitherto totally lacked and the

want of which had neutralised the offensive power of its unconquerable infantry, namely a force of well-mounted expert Mughal cavalry. Therefore, at the treaty of Allahabad (16 August, 1765), Lord Clive guaranteed Najaf Khan an annual pension of two lakhs of Rupees out of the 28 lakhs promised to the Emperor in return for the grant of the *diwāni* of Bengal.

All these operations had been conducted by the English in the name of the Emperor, and Najaf was retained at their conclusion as a general in the imperial service and their best supported protege and most loyal partisan among Shah Alam's courtiers. At English recommendation he was appointed by the Emperor faujdar of Kora (1766.) This roused the jealousy of Munir-ud-daulah, another supporter of the English interest among the Emperor's counsellors and the most acceptable envoy in negotiating with them. Munir at last got Najaf dismissed from his post at Kora on the false charge that he had failed to collect the standard revenue (21 Feb. 1770.) The English Governor pleaded with the Emperor for Najaf as hard as he could, but Najaf had to live for more than a year in Allahabad in unemployment and distress. His day came when in May 1771 the Emperor set out on his march to Delhi. Such an able captain could not be passed over when the imperial Government had none with even a quarter of his competence and experience. So, Najaf Khan was given Rs. 50,000 for

equipping his contingent and followed the Emperor on his march. He soon justified his choice and proved himself the fittest man for the supreme command of the Empire's forces.

§ 4. *Character of Mirza Najaf Khan.*

When we contemplate the career of Najaf Khan we do not know what to admire most,— his military capacity, his political insight, or his humanity. In none of these points he had an equal among the peerage of Delhi or the vassal princes of the Empire in his own day. Najibud-daulah may have surpassed him in military genius and fought greater battles against mightier antagonists, but the circumstances of his time were different, and he merely carried on the traditional Afghan system of war with supreme thoroughness. Najaf Khan, on the other hand, had received a military education denied to the great Ruhela; he had faced British troops in the field and later fought side by side with them; he knew and appreciated the new warfare which the Europeans had brought into India, and he quickly adapted himself to the change and successfully incorporated into his army alien elements and diverse instruments. He concentrated on fire arms, and assembled ten thousand sepoy musketeers trained in the European system and a heavy park of improved artillery; he enlisted European partisan leaders like Rene Madec, Walter Reinhard and the

Comte de Modave, and added to these two arms the best cavalry then available in India, namely the Mughal horse. But he was never, like Daulat Rao Sindhia, the helpless slave of his foreign mercenaries. The result of this successful grafting of the new on the old was that the Marathas Ruhelas and Jats, till then considered invincible, were hopelessly out-classed in their wars with Najaf Khan and the lieutenants who carried on his legacy, till De Boigne confronted them with a still more modernised force before which nothing Indian could stand and which met its doom only from the white troops of another race.

As a politician Najaf Khan stands even higher. His self-control and calmness in the midst of harassing disappointments and hostile plots won the admiration of a cultured French observer, the Comte de Modave, who wrote from his camp, "I do not know how to describe the composure of mind and tranquillity of Najaf Khan in the midst of these Court intrigues directed against him. He was informed about their smallest details, and amused himself by discussing them with his friends. He used to say that these petty contrivances were the resource of the weak."* In the correctness of his vision into the future he had no rival among his peers.

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* Modave, *Journal du Voyage...*, ms. p. 289 (tr. by me in *Bengal Past & Present*, 1936.)

His patience was inexhaustible because he knew his own strength. From the same source also sprang his marvellous moderation, whether we consider the long years during which he persisted in rejecting his lieutenants' demand for marching to Delhi and forcibly removing the mischievous Abdul Ahad Khan from the Emperor's counsels, or study his treatment of his defeated foes. In the hour of victory he never attempted to crush them outright, but followed a policy of compromise and liberal concession which turned his late enemies into grateful and loyal allies, as the great Akbar had so often done. In the end, his successful campaigns left no dormant danger behind them. To the innocent peasantry and traders and the non-combatants of captured cities he extended a humanity of treatment and a generous protection of their property and family honour that were unknown in Asiatic warfare in that age. When we study his character we can understand why his death called forth universal and spontaneous mourning from the people, regardless of their rank or creed.

§ 5. *Najaf Khan compared with Najib-ud-daulah.*

As the dictator of Delhi and commander-in-chief (*Mir Bakhshi*) of the forces of the Empire, Najaf Khan naturally invites comparison with Najib-ud-daulah, his immediate predecessor in that office. At the zenith of his career, Najib-ud-

daulah was for ten years the regent of the Mughal Empire, his position and power undisputed by any Court rival or Muslim potentate in India. His strength lay in the fact of his being the head of a Ruhela clan and the recognised leader of the Afghan race in general throughout Hindustan, while at the same time he was up to 1767 backed, sometimes by the presence but oftener by the prestige and name of his unconquerable patron, the Durrāni Shāh. In India itself he was the Sunni champion besides being the head of the Afghan race. Even without Durrāni backing, he was manifestly the greatest Indian general of his age after the death of Asaf Jāh Nizām-ul-mulk. At the same time his possession of fertile and comparatively undisturbed jagirs in the Doab and upper Rohilkhand, which were carefully managed by his able and faithful land-stewards, ensured for him a large and steady income, so that at the time of his death he was the richest Muslim ruler of North India.

Najaf Khan, on the other hand, possessed some social advantages which birth had denied to Najib-ud-daulah. That Ruhela had started life in India as a poor uninfluential man, entering service in the humble capacity of a foot soldier. From this small beginning he had risen by sheer merit and unfailing opportunism to the virtual headship of the Empire. But Najaf Khan was a Mirzā, boasting of the royal blood of Persia and closely connected with the house of the Oudh

Nawābs by marriage. All this, however, counted for nothing in practical effect as steps to his rise to greatness. He had no racial backing in India ; even the Persian Shujā, his kinsman and brother of the faith, was his personal enemy, while Najaf Khan's creed made him utterly friendless at the Court of Delhi, where the Shia faction created by Amir Khan and Muhammad Ishāq Khan had been crushed after the failure of Safdar Jang's rising against his master in 1753.

In the royal council, the ears of the spineless weak-minded Shah Alam were time after time poisoned by Abdul Ahad Khan and other jealous intriguers against Najaf Khan, in spite of his evident loyalty and devoted services, and Najaf had to turn round and meet the challenge of these domestic enemies while he was entangled with foreign foes. In addition to such repeated thwarting by his Court rivals unknown to Najib-ud-daulah, Mirzā Najaf was also hampered by his lack of funds, as he had no fertile and protected jagirs for supporting his army with, and his victorious campaigns were often abruptly ended by the clamours of his unpaid soldiery.

§ 6. *Zābita Khan provokes war with Emperor.*

We shall now trace the services of Najaf Khan under the newly restored Government of Delhi.

When the news of Najib-ud-daulah's death (31 Oct. 1770) reached Shah Alam at Allahabad,

he first sent to Zābita Khan,* the eldest son of the departed chief, not only the usual condolences but also a robe of investiture for succession to his father's high office of Mir Bakhshi (Head of the Army) with the attached title of Amir-ul-umāra, and asked him to come with his forces and escort the Emperor to Delhi, where "the throne would belong to the Emperor and the control of the Empire to Zābita Khan," as had been the practice during his great father's regency of ten years. At the same time, the Emperor called upon Zābita Khan to pay the customary fee of succession for his father's estates and office, and settle the accounts of the Crownlands and privy purse estates round Delhi and in the upper Doab held by Najib for so many years. Even in the lifetime of Alamgir II there had been complaints that Najib was realising lakhs of Rupees every year as rent from these lands, but paying only a quarter of them or even less into the imperial Exchequer.

At the outset the Emperor had no unfriendly feeling towards Zābita, and indeed he had no means of asserting himself against that Ruhela chief whose troops were garrisoning Delhi and guarding the Emperor's mother and heir, while the exiled monarch had no army of his own. Zābita knew his sovereign's impotence and after

* G. Ali, ii. 266, 283. Muna Lal 121-123. Miskin 272-273. *DC.*

detaining the imperial messengers for some time, packed them off with a haughty refusal, though he assumed the robe of Mir Bakhshi (29 Dec. 1770). According to Ghulām Ali, Zābita's natural Afghan stupidity was aggravated by the insolence of youth and the pride of such vast wealth acquired without the least exertion on his part.

Thereafter, a rapid shifting of scenes took place on the political stage of the Empire. Shah Alam welcomed Mahadji Sindhia's secret offer of adhesion and came to terms with the Maratha plenipotentiary in Hindustan; Delhi fort was wrested from Zābita's agent and occupied by the Marathas in the Emperor's name; a formal treaty was signed with them for escorting Shah Alam to his capital, and finally the Emperor himself arrived near Farrukhabad on his march to Delhi. Here his first conspicuous success was the exaction of a tribute from the heir of Ahmad Khan Bangash, and this was effected only with the backing of Sindhia's armed force. The royal counsellors urged Shah Alam to follow this success up by attacking Zābita and compelling him to pay tribute and homage. But the Emperor either quailed from an encounter, or deemed it better policy not to antagonise Zābita, as such a course would drive that rich Ruhela to form a pact with the Marathas and leave the Emperor without a single friend in the world.

So, Zābita Khan was again gently invited to come and pay his loyal respects and offer the customary congratulatory presents at the foot of the throne during the next Coronation in Delhi. All the other nobles and vassal princes of the realm did this duty, but Zābita Khan continued obstinate in his contumacy, refusing to part with any money. Then the Emperor decided to punish him ; the pay of the royal army had fallen into arrears and the soliders were clamouring to be let loose on the Ruhela lands as the only means of relieving their distress. Not a day was to be lost ; it was already January and in a few months' time the rising flood of the rivers would make them uncrossable for armies.

§ 7. *Marathas force the Ruhela lines on the Ganges below Hardwar.*

The campaign was promptly started. A body of imperial troops led by Mirzā Najaf Khan with the Maratha army under Tukoji Holkar, Mahadji Sindhia and Visāji Krishna, crossed into the Doab. Shah Alam himself left Delhi only eleven days after his arrival there, and marched ten miles behind the army, by way of Loni, Bagpat, and Ghausgarh to Chāndpur,* near the

* This Chāndpur (three miles east of the Pathri railway stn. on the Hardwar line) should not be confounded with Chandi *ghat*, situated on the *opposite* bank of the Ganges and seven miles north of it, i.e., one mile south of Hardwar.

west bank of the Ganges, 15 miles due east of Rurki.

Meantime the defiant foe had matured his own plans. Zābita lodged his treasures and the families of all the Ruhela chiefs in Pathargarh (the stone fort of Najibabad) with a small garrison, while he himself took post at Shakartāl with some 4,000 troops and distributed the bulk of his army along the eastern bank of the Ganges from that fort up to Hardwār 38 miles northwards. He hoped to repeat his father's resounding success against Dattaji Sindhia in 1759 and at the same time guard against any incursion into the Najibabad district across the uppermost reaches of the Ganges like Govind Pant Bundele's raid in the November of that year. But Zābita was not Najib, and the Marathas profited by the lesson of Dattaji's failure to leave Shakartāl untouched and to concentrate all their strength on forcing the Ganges in its uppermost and shallowest part. The season too favoured the invaders. It was now the depth of winter and the Ganges water had touched its lowest level.

Over these 38 miles the Ruhela forces were postéd in groups, entrenching the east bank at every known ford and holding it in strength. The Marathas dug trenches opposite them on the west bank, and then very successfully deluded the enemy. They had decided to deliver their blow at Chandighat, just below Hardwār, at the northern extremity; but they caused it to be

noised abroad that they would cross several miles further down, and even sent their camp and baggage away from Chandighat and spent several days in seeming idleness and neglect at this vital point. Then after the Ruhelas had been thrown completely off their guard and diverted from the real point of attack, the invaders began their crossing.

On 23rd February, three hours before sunrise, the Marathas drove their horses into the river at Chandighat, reached the sand bank in midstream unperceived, and advancing to the further bank fell upon the Ruhela trenches sword in hand. The surprise was complete, but the defenders soon rallied, fired their muskets and rockets, and then rushing out pressed the assailants back into the river. Meantime Najaf Khan had reached the island in midstream, and halting his camel-swivels there opened fire at close range on the crowded Afghan ranks opposite. His deadly fire decided the issue. Karam Khan Razzar and four or five other sardars, fighting in the front rank of the enemy, were the first to be shot down. Then the Ruhela army fell back; only Sādat Khan Afridi with a few hundred brave men held the ground against ten thousand imperialists and Marathas who had crossed over by this time. His horse fell under him, he himself was shot in both thighs, but he changed horses and fought on till he was stricken down with more wounds. His men fled away, but his

brother Sādiq Khan, though severely wounded, made a reckless charge upon Najaf Khan himself. All people gave way before this wounded tiger, horridly striped with running blood all over his body and growling out the Afghan battle cry *ān ! ān !* The desperado reached the elephant of Najaf Khan, who was roused by the challenge and crying out, "Yes, I am ready for you," struck Sādiq Khan with his spear, while the servant in the back seat of his *hauda* shot the Afridi down. With him the last trace of resistance ended ; the Afghans broke and fled in headlong rout.

The heads of the fallen Ruhela generals were severed and sent to the Emperor. Ali Muhammad Khan, blind of one eye, a wounded colonel of Zābita's army, was captured when hiding himself among the bushes on the river bank. The news of this splendid victory, the first in his reign, reached the Emperor in his camp, ten miles in the rear, at noon. The entire credit for it was rightly given to Najaf Khan, and it became the first step of his ladder to supreme eminence in the State. "The Emperor showered favours on him, and stretching his own beard with both hands towards Najaf Khan, cried out, 'Yet have saved my honour.' "*

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* *DC*. G. Ali, ii. 284-296. Muna Lal 125-127. Miskin 276-277. *Ibrat*. i. 203-207. Bihari Lal (tr. by me in *I.H.Q.* 1935, pp. 641 *et seq.*)

§ 8. *Flight of Zabita Khan ; capture of Shakartal.*

The victory was decisive. The Afghan resistance had been shattered at one blow. All was now confusion terror and despair in Zābita Khan's ranks. Every ford held by his men was abandoned and the contagion even spread to Shakartāl. When the news of the Marathas having established themselves in full force on the eastern bank of the Ganges, with the road to the Ruhela homes open before them, reached Zābita that evening, he went to beg armed aid from his brother-in-law Faizullah Khan, who had encamped with some 4000 men opposite to this fort. "Faizullah who had never seen a battle, in terror declined the proposal to assist in the defence of Shakartāl, but that very night took the road to Rampur, whence after only a night's halt he fled to the Tarai jungles with his family and treasures, setting fire to his capital."

The desertion of his sole ally and the flight of all his troops made Zābita Khan's position utterly untenable. So, late that night he abandoned Shakartāl and fled away on an elephant with only 40 attendants, to join his ally in the northern hills. Indescribable confusion reigned among the leaderless Ruhelas at Shakartāl: "the whole camp was breaking up in flight, the bazar was deserted, the tents were on fire . . . . . The roads on the eastern bank leading to Najibabad were crowded with Afghan fugitives, who were

cursing their Mughalia comrades" [as the cause of the defeat.] Zābita's uncle Afzal Khan was captured.

The myriads of Maratha light horse now overspread the fair province of Rohilkhand in a resistless flood, because every Afghan chief of note, including Hāfiz Rahmat and the sons of Dundi Khan, had taken refuge in the Tarai with their women and troops, leaving their cities to their fate. The memory of the Maratha incursion in Safdar Jang's cause in 1751 was still fresh and all their great chiefs except two were now dead ; and of these two remaining giants of old, Sardār Khan was dying and Hāfiz a brokendown old man disgusted with life by squabbles with his son and brethren.

After the victory the Emperor marched south down the right bank of the Ganges to Shakartāl, which he reached on 1st March. But there was no prize left in that fort now. Immediately after the flight of Zābita and his army, "the Gujars and Mewātis living in the environs of Shakartāl plundered that masterless tract worse than the Marathas ever did. When the victors arrived at that fort they found only sacked and blazing houses. Only a few pieces of artillery, too heavy to be removed, were secured by the Marathas."*

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* *DC.* Miskin (present) 278-279. *Ibrat.* i. 207.

§ 9. *Siege of Pathargarh.*

The Marathas, in rapid pursuit of the Ruhelas fleeing from the Ganges bank, invested Pathargarh, the stone fort built by Najib-ud-daulah one mile east of his capital Najibabad. Najaf Khan joined the siege, and the Emperor too arrived there soon after, encamping in the rear, between Sahanpur and Jalalabad, some four miles west of Najibabad. The fort was no doubt strong and well stored with guns and munition, but sufficient provisions had not been laid in, and it contained the wives and children of all the Afghan sardars (who had themselvs fled away to the Tarai jungles.) After a fortnight's exchange of fire, old Sultan Khan who commanded it, offered to capitulate if the lives and family honour of the garrison were assured.

The Marathas at once accepted the offer, and on 16th March Pathargarh was vacated. "The Marathas took their stand at the gate of the fort. At first the poorer people came out ; they were stripped and searched and let off almost naked. The rich people threw caskets full of gems and money from the ramparts into the wet ditch for concealing them. Many noble Afghan families, after coming out of the hands of the Marathas, sought asylum within the circuit of the imperial halting place. But the plunderers of the camp and the Turāni Mughals robbed them of the clothing on their persons which even the Marathas had

spared, and they dragged away the women by the hand towards their own tents!" Najaf Khan rescued them and after some days sent them away under escort of his own followers to Jalalabad-Luhari in the north Muzaffarnagar district, which was a large and as yet safe Afghan colony.*

§ 10. *Spoils taken at Pathargarh; quarrel between Emperor and the Marathas.*

The Marathas spent twenty days in seizing the property found in Pathargarh and digging out the buried treasure. Spies reported to them that the inmates had thrown their riches into the wet ditch. It was very deep, and so they drained it by cutting a canal from it to a neighbouring stream and thus recovered the treasure. A quarrel soon broke out between the two allies over the division of the spoils of victory. The Marathas were taxed with breach of the agreement made at the beginning of the campaign. On the imperial side it was alleged that "the faithless Marathas

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* Pathargarh.—Miskin 281-282. G. Ali, ii. 296 (scanty.) Muna Lal 128. *Ibrat.* i. 208-210. *DC.* Bihari Lal (in *I.H.Q.*)

Khare's assertion that all the Maratha women dragged into servility by the Ruhelas from the Bhau's camp at Panipat were liberated at this capture of Pathargarh, finds no support in any contemporary record in Persian or Marathi, nor does he cite any authority. (iv. p. 1888.)

"The Marathas defaced the curious workmanship of Najibuddaulah's tomb" at Najibabad, [Atkinson, *N. W. P. Gazetteer*, v. 352] but did not "demolish it" as Khare writes.

had seized all the artillery and treasures of Zābita Khan, as well as his elephants, horses and other property, and offered only a worthless fraction to the Emperor." At last the patience of the Emperor was worn out, and on 3rd May "harsh altercations broke out between him and the envoys of the Marathas, and the latter went away in anger." Next day he sent Rajah Rāmnāth to them to negotiate. However, on the 11th a compromise was patched up through Sindhia, and out of the property officially attached at Pathargarh, one half was given to the Emperor, one fourth to the Peshwa and the remaining quarter divided among the Maratha sardars, but the elephants cash and jewels remained unshared. The Emperor's demand was for money and Sindhia promised him two lakhs. But this was only a fraction in value of what had been seized. As a Maratha agent reported from Nagina on 9th May, lakhs and lakhs of Rupees worth of booty was appropriated by the Maratha officers without crediting it either to the Peshwa or to the Emperor.

From the carefully kept account-books of the Peshwas which have been preserved, we get an exact and detailed statement of the gains of the Maratha Government at Pathargarh. The total value of the gold and silver of all kinds including coins, was ten lakhs of Rupees. 2298 horses were found, out of which 1043 were given to the Emperor. Arms and munitions amounted only

to three large cannon (each bearing a name), two jizails, seven zamburaks, 1842 cannon-balls, a hundred rockets and 530 maunds of powder, &c. [*SPD*. xxix. pp. 337-340, 343.]

Another point of friction was the disposal of Zābita Khan's jagirs which included all the Crown-lands in the Panipat Saharanpur and Mirat districts and which the Marathas claimed by virtue of the imperial grants made to them before the battle of Panipat. [Ch. 13 § 8.] But the Emperor now gave Saharanpur to Fakhruddin Khan (a son of the ex-wazir Qamruddin), and Anupshahar and Karnal to Mahadji Sindhia, that Maratha general having undertaken to bring Shujā-ud-daulah to Court and make him personally support his sovereign. We may here add that the negotiations for making Shujā perform his duties as wazir in person failed. He no doubt exchanged turbans with Mahadji Sindhia in sign of full brotherhood, but it was done *in absentia*, the turban without the head under it having travelled from Faizabad to Sindhia's camp for being exchanged with the Maratha's cap (*pāgoti.*) It had been at first settled that Mahadji should go to Faizabad with the Oudh Nawab's envoys—Anupgir Gosain and Elich Khan, personally assure Shujā of his safety and bring him to the Emperor's camp. He actually set out, on 11th May, but after making four marches stopped on account of an irreconcilable breach with Visāji Krishna, and finally gave up the

mission in disgust. The two Oudh envoys went back covered with failure.*

§ 11. *Ruhelas sue for peace ; terms.*

When the fugitive Zābita Khan went to the jungle of Nānakmātā and met Hāfiz Rahmat and other Ruhela chiefs hiding there, his appeal to them for aid in recovering his patrimony fell on deaf ears ; all of them were afraid of facing the Marathas backed by the Emperor's authority and personal presence. Zābita in despair sought asylum with Shujā, who marched to Shahabad with Captain Gabriel Harper and welcomed him (12th May) like a brother, out of gratitude to Najib-ud-daulah. A little later, Hāfiz Rahmat came to Shujā at Gopāmau, and negotiations for a settlement began, Shujā acting as the middleman between the Ruhelas and the Marathas. Visāji agreed to make peace for a war-contribution of forty lakhs of Rupees from Hāfiz and Dundi Khan. The Ruhelas were utterly defenceless; Zābita's family and those of all the leading men of his clan were captives in the Emperor's hands ; the invaders had overspread Rohilkhand with none to oppose them. In the Tarai a severe epidemic was rapidly thinning the number of the Afghan refugees, "a hundred to a hundred and fifty men

* *Ibrat.* i. 210. *SPD.* xxix. 277 (completed by 270), 276, 285. Muna Lal 129-131. G. Ali, ii. 297-298.

were dying daily, and their soldiers were fleeing away to Farrukhabad and other places ; those who remained were ailing." On the Nawab of Oudh standing security for the above indemnity, the Marathas withdrew from Rohilkhand, the Ruhela sardars came out of the jungle, and every one took possession of his own lands. A separate peace was made with Zābita Khan, who was restored to his family estates in Najibabad and Saharanpur, and his wives and children were released from captivity. [*CPC*. iv. 60.]

Mahadji objected to these terms. The breach between him and Visāji widened so far that he gave up visiting his chief. The Maratha enterprise ended in confusion and failure to realise any money. As the Peshwa's agent wrote from Moradabad on 29th May, "It seems that our political arrangements which had begun to mature in certain places, will be thrown into confusion. Our leaders are not of one mind, but every one acts independently. God only knows what the result of it will be . . . Nobody is paying a pice of the promised contribution, (another letter adds.) Our troops are eager to go back to their homes."

On the Emperor's wish to return to Delhi becoming known, Visāji and Tukoji pressed him to march on Allahabad instead, for exacting the old tribute of Bengal and Bihar from the English holders of those provinces and also for compelling Shujā to pay revenue to his overlord. But the

Emperor knew his own military weakness and the faithlessness of his only allies the Marathas. His chief counsellor in these matters was Najaf Khan, a regular pensioner of the English and a soldier who had personally witnessed the prowess of the British army during 1763-1765. Mahadji Sindhia too supported Najaf's views, and the Emperor therefore adhered to his decision to turn back. One day, Visāji and Tukoji visited Hisām-ud-din, the Emperor's prime minister, and vehemently pressed for the march to the eastern provinces. The dispute grew so bitter that the followers on both sides took up their arms for a fight. But the Emperor forbade the clash and kept Najaf's contingent ready for defending him if necessary. This cooled the ire of the Marathas and they agreed to retreat.*

§ 12. *Imperialists plunder Rohilkhand. Return of the expedition to Delhi.*

The invaders began their return journey from Rohilkhand at the end of May. The Emperor started from Najibabad, as usual two marches behind his allies. By way of Nihtaur, Sherkot, Seohara, Salimpur and Amroha, he reached the Ganges which he crossed at Puth, and

* *DC SPD*. xxix. 271,276. Muna Lal 129-131. Bihari Lal's *Life of Najibuddaulah* (tr. by me in *I.H.Q.* 1935.) Return,—*Ibrat*, i. 210-211. Miskin 282. *DC*. *SPD*. xxix. pp. 326-328.

moved due west through the Mirat district *viâ* Bagsar, Hāpur and Lākhan, to Delhi, which was entered on 9th July. Most of the cities in Rohil-Khand, like Aonla, Barily and Rampur had been set on fire by the fleeing Ruhelas; what remained was now ransacked by the Marathas. One city alone, Amroha, held out under its Sayyids, who ultimately saved it by promising a ransom of Rs. 60,000 through Najaf Khan. This amount was realised by cruel distraint by the Mirzā's lieutenant Najaf Quli Khan, "who was a second Yezid in hardness of heart," and paid to the Peshwa. Returning to the Doab, the Marathas laid siege to Khurja, a Jat post, which they took after two months of trench warfare (on 30th July.) At Delhi the Court spent the rest of the month in celebrating the first grand Coronation of the restored monarch, on 29th July. Then followed three months of inaction owing to the monsoons.

§ 13. *Visaji Krishna and Tukoji Holkar quarrel with the Emperor. Delhi forces attack the Jats. Rene Madec joins the Emperor.*

On the arrival of winter a storm burst over the Emperor and his city. The Pathargarh expedition had ended in a rupture between the Emperor and the Marathas. The Ruhela chief had been utterly defeated, but the fruits of the victory had disappointed the two allies; the financial distress of neither was relieved by the

spoils of war. The Emperor was convinced that the Marathas would neither give him armed help in recovering his lost dominions, nor provide him with a more liberal revenue than Najib-ud-daulah had done. On the other hand, the Marathas legitimately demanded the fulfilment of the terms of his treaty with them (22 March 1771) which they had fully carried out by restoring him to his capital. The 30 lakhs promised to them in that treaty still remained unpaid, and the bankrupt Puna Government was constantly urging its North Indian agents to realise this money. The Emperor having refused to invade Oudh for exacting tribute from its viceroy or to make an incursion into Bihar for its long-outstanding revenue, the Maratha chiefs pointed out that in these circumstances the only person who could produce money in the Emperor's need was Zābita Khan, the inheritor of Najib's immense hoards, and that Zābita could be placated only by pardoning him for his past contumacy and appointing him to his father's office of Mir Bakhshi, with all the family jagirs. As the price of this Maratha intercession and armed pressure for enabling him to gain these objects, Zābita agreed to pay the Peshwa ten and a half lakhs of Rupees. Tukoji Holkar, as the hereditary ally of Zābita, converted Visāji Krishna to this policy; but Mahadji Sindhia refused to promote the interests of the house of Najib-ud-daulah or to take part in the proposed demonstration against the Emperor in support of them.

The late Ruhela campaign had suddenly raised Mirzā Najaf Khan to the highest credit at Court and the greatest influence over the Emperor's mind, who now ordered him to raise troops and form a new army worthy of the Crown. For this purpose, the revenue of several districts north and west of Delhi was assigned to him and he sent his collectors there,—Najaf Quli to Hansi-Hisar, Niyāz Beg (Turāni Mughal) to Saharanpur, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni to Jalalabad-Luhari (*i.e.*, Ghausgarh in north Muzaffarnagar), Afrāsiyāb Khan to Sonepat and Pānipat. The former disbanded veterans of the imperial army as well as youths aspiring to the profession of arms, came to Delhi in crowds as the news spread that a new army was to be raised under the Emperor's banner. Very soon an excellent force of about seven thousand men was enlisted, besides a contingent of foreign Muslim cavalry (called Mughalia, *i.e.*, Persians and Turks) who belonged to Najaf Khan's personal following. Miskin describes the recruits as "strong and handsome youths, well mounted and of the Hindustani breed, wonderful to look at,"—but, as the result showed, they proved too raw and undependable in their first battle (in December next.)

The rise of Najaf Khan excited the jealousy of Hisām-ud-din, and that worthless favourite plotted with Tukoji Holkar and Visāji to get Zābita pardoned by the Emperor and appointed as Mir Bakhshi under Maratha patronage and

thus set him up as a counterpoise to Najaf Khan in the official headship of the army of the Empire. Shah Alam rejected this demand, and his refusal brought down a Maratha attack upon Delhi at the end of the year.

As usual in India, the rainy season enforced inactivity on all parties. At its close the imperial forces invaded the Jat territory stretching south of Delhi and took a number of small mud forts. But the Jat Rajah made peace with the Marathas by agreeing to a money contribution, and being thus relieved of one enemy, sent his forces to oppose the imperialists. His vanguard was led by René Madec with a newly equipped well-armed force of 3,000 men and eight field guns, besides Jat cavalry. At Madec's approach the imperialists fell back and all these Jat posts were recovered without a blow. The Emperor then promptly concluded his long drawn negotiations for seducing Madec. The French partisan leader was promised Rs. 40,000 per month with power to add to his contingent of 3,000 men up to any number he might consider necessary ; and a patent for the title of Nawab Shams-ud-daulah Bahadur Qaim Jang, six-*hazari* (both *zāt* and *sawār*) was sent to him. Madec assures us that in this act of desertion his object was purely patriotic. In leaving the Jat service abruptly he was sacrificing much of his property lodged in his house in Bharatpur as well as the sum of two lakhs of Rupees, being the arrears of his pay due from Nawal Singh ; but

he was at this heavy cost carrying out the instructions of M. Chevalier, the French Chief of the Chandernagar factory, for establishing a French force and French influence at Delhi as a set-off to the British conquest of Bengal.

Madec left the Jat service without giving notice, and had therefore to fight his way through strong opposition up to the gates of Delhi. His march was conducted with remarkable skill, courage and tenacity, and at its end he entered Delhi on 15th November 1772, and was welcomed by the Emperor with ceremonies and honours which entirely turned the head* of the ex-sailor and rough adventurer. Madec's arrival happened to be timed to a crisis in the affairs of Shah Alam ; only a month after the French captain's entrance into Delhi, "the fortunes of the Empire came to be decided under the walls of the capital", as he justly observes in his memoirs.

* Madec writes in his *Mémoire* : "The third day [17th Nov. 1772] I went to the Emperor's audience...in the same order in which I had made my entry into the city,—(described before as, "I can say without ostentation that my entry into Delhi had the air of a triumph and that I entered there more like a monarch than a private person.")...The Emperor invested me with a robe of very rich cloth of gold with all the ornaments, namely a girdle, a turban and an aigrette set with precious stones...In cosidering the state of grandeur in which I found myself... I could hardly believe that it was not a dream."

§ 14. *Maratha attack on Delhi.*

Visāji Krishna and Tukoji, after their recommendation to the Emperor in favour of Zābita Khan and the Jat Rajah had been rejected,* assembled their forces in the Doab and made a move towards Delhi at the end of the monsoons, arriving within eight miles of the capital on 21st November. The Emperor held a consultation with all his nobles. Fazl Ali Khan was detached with the two battalions of sepoys supplied by the English, to go and entrench the eastern bank of the Jamuna near Shahdara. But the Marathas approached the capital from the south. They crossed over to Khizirabad, a village on the Jamuna west bank, some ten miles south-east of the Turkmān gate of Delhi.

Najaf Khan from the outset counselled a bold resistance. But the Emperor's cause was ruined by his personal cowardice and weakness of character which made him a puppet in the hands

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* When the Maratha chiefs demanded the subsidy promised in 1771, the Emperor replied, "During the recent (Ruhela) campaign you have seized all the spoils and looted all the country. What have I gained except hardship and a debt of lakhs of Rupees? What has been my gain from your adhesion? Even Mirza Najaf has spent on his own troops the 80,000 Rupees that was realised at Amroha." [*Ibrat* i. 215.] To the Maratha demand in favour of Zābita Khan and the Jat Rajah, his reply was, "I know my rights. I am the Sovereign and the Jats and Ruhelas are rebels who have usurped territories under obedience to me." [Madec.]

of his ministers and these ministers were moved solely by mutual jealousy and selfishness. Hisām-ud-din had recently supplanted Saifuddin Muhammad Khan as the Emperor's chief adviser and confidant, which was a poor requital for Saifuddin's services in 1771 in securing the Maratha alliance, wresting Delhi fort from Zābita's men, and conducting the Emperor to his capital. Hisām was mortally jealous of Najaf, the man of the sword and the darling of the army. The ministers moved at cross purposes to each other, while their master wavered between them. As the French captain noted with surprise, "The Emperor assembled such troops as he had ; but he did not do what he ought to have done on the occasion,—he did not appear at the head of his army." Najaf's counsel prevailed for the time and war was decided upon. The Marathas from the gate of Delhi repeated their demand on behalf of Zābita Khan, but it was again rejected by the Court.

On 7th December Mirzā Najaf went in force towards Bārapula to fight the Maratha army; he stood ready till midday, but neither side advanced to the encounter, and so Najaf returned to the city in the afternoon. The imperialists used to issue daily from the walls, march two miles south into the Old Fort (Purāna Qila) and stand in battle order ; a little skirmishing sometimes took place, and at last the two armies retired to their respective camps. The sandy bank (*reti*) of the

Jamuna below the Old Fort was entrenched and held by the imperialists, but this position was really untenable against the myriads of Maratha light horse. After skirmishes of a more extensive kind on the 10th, 12th and 16th, the decisive engagement came off on Friday the 17th of December.*

§ 15. *Battle of Purana Qila.*

Both sides fixed upon this date for a pitched battle. It was the first conflict in Hindustan in which European-trained and European-led sepoys and artillery were employed on the Emperor's side, but superior generalship, even more than superior numbers, decided the issue against him, for no fault of the Europeans. Early in the morning the imperialists marched out of the city and drew up their ranks facing the south a cannon shot beyond the Old Fort, their left flank resting on the Jamuna and their right on some ruined fortifications (Firuzabad.) "The corn-fields, surrounded by high hedges, served as so many entrenchments. . . . It was a very advantageous position, allowing of a vigorous defence," as Madec noted. But all these advantages were lost through the inexperience of the

* *DC.* Madec's *Mémoire. Ibrat.* i. 214-217. Muna Lal 135-138 G. Ali iii. 4-6. Miskin, 283. Battle,—*CPC.* iv. 122, 138 *DC.* Miskin 284. G. Ali, iii. 7-12. Muna Lal, 138-140. *Ibrat.* i. 217-218. Madec (best).

imperial forces and the absence of unity of command on their side. Their first line was composed of the Mughalia cavalry under Qalich Beg Khan, "drawn up in platoons according to the terrain", on the right. Next, to the east, stood Madec with his three battalions of sepoys and eight guns. The extreme left was formed by two battalions of English sepoys under Gangārām and Bhawāni Singh commandants with four pieces of artillery. In the second line, behind a row of imperial guns, stood Mirzā Najaf with his personal contingent, all on foot. Far away in the rear, close to the river bank at the south-eastern corner of the New City, Ghāziuddin Khan's mansion was occupied by the reserve under Hisām, who had entrenched the plain below the Blue Bastion and ranged 30 heavy pieces of artillery there.

The battle began with the usual exchange of gun fire, in which two powder chests on the imperial side exploded, killing some 400 men. Then the Marathas came on to the fight. As they advanced, they quickened their pace and menaced the Mughalia cavalry (the extreme right of the defence.) These men were shaken even before being assailed. The Marathas had now halted to receive the expected charge of their enemy, but on seeing the wavering in the Mughal ranks they promptly seized the opportunity and themselves charged. The Mughal cavalry was heavily outnumbered (about five to one), and being unaided by any momentum of attack, at once broke and

fled. On their heels, one compact division of the Maratha horse passed with lightning speed behind the imperial battle line and galloped towards the city.

At the same time, the Maratha right wing advanced against the imperial left. "These *paltans*, through ignorance and mismanagement, fired off their muskets while the Maratha horse were still beyond range, and before they could reload the enemy were upon them, trampling and cutting them down. The remnant of these sepoys made a right turn and came to rest upon Madec's division." Thus the imperial left, like the right, dissolved away at the first impact.

The battle now gathered round the centre. Here Madec had been attacked in front and rear and completely enveloped. He had formed his men into a square in the nick of the time, thanks to the energy and alertness of his second in command Mons. de Kerascao; but in effecting this change of formation he had to give some ground and abandon three pieces of cannon and two munition carts. By a judicious fire on all the four faces he succeeded in keeping the enemy back. Mirzā Najaf himself had been caught at a disadvantage and broken. The Maratha centre, disregarding the fire of the wretched imperial artillery, had swept through his line of guns, routed Najaf's followers, and forced him with a handful of his personal guards to take refuge in Madec's square. Early in the day his nephew

Mirza Ahsan had been mortally wounded by a cannon-ball.

And now the French square alone stood in the field like a solitary island in the midst of a raging sea of horseman. But it was an island built on granite. From noon up to three hours of the night, Madec held his position, keeping the enemy at a distance and preventing them from dragging his three guns away. In the meantime, the Maratha left wing, pursuing and slaying the fugitive Mughal horse, had reached the gates of Delhi and looted Madec's camp and baggage rest-ting under its walls. As he writes, "I lost five elephants, all my horses, camels, tents, carriages and quantities of other effects. The royal favourite Hisām, who held the neighbouring ram-parts with his heavy artillery, did not advance one step either to reinforce Najaf Khan in the field or even to save my camp close in front of him." He was openly accused of firing blank charges in order to complete the ruin of his rival Najaf, and his soldiers were seen joining the Marathas in the pillage of Madec's unguarded camp. Shortly after this, Hisām fled into the city with his troops, abandoning his trenches.

The Maratha horse then entered Ghāzi-ud-din's mansion and ransacked it thoroughly. Here the rich trader Karim Khan had deposited his merchandise worth lakhs of Rupees, some elephants, and 30 to 40 horses for safety, but all these were plundered. Close to the Delhi Gate

of the capital, the raiders seized two elephants of the Emperor himself. By way of the now defenceless eastern side of the city, close to the river bank, the Marathas even penetrated within the walls and dispersed for plunder through Sadullah Khan's market square. Here they were attacked and driven out by Sayyid Muhammad Khan Baluch (the brother of Musavi Khan.) Once again the incurable predatory instinct of the Marathas and the lack of true generalship among their chiefs robbed them of the all but conquered imperial capital.

Three hours after sunset the remnant of the imperial army, sheltered by Madec's carefully led square, returned to the city. There were loud charges of treachery made against Hisām, but the Emperor lacked the spirit for punishing the traitor. He merely rewarded the gallant fighters, embracing M. Madec and Najaf Khan and robing them with his own shawls &c.

It was reported that in this battle the Marathas had lost 17 sardars slain and 12 wounded, and three thousand men had fallen on the two sides together. But it was decisive. Though the imperialists manned the trenches and exchanged a distant fire with the enemy for a few days after it, they no longer ventured out into the open. The Pindharis set fire to Patparganj and Jaisinghpura. Madec, when sitting on the edge of his trenches among the ruins of Old Delhi, was wounded by a bullet in the thigh. All his

equipment and property had been lost and his force terribly cut up in the battle of the 17th.*

§ 16. *Complete submission of the Emperor to the Marathas.*

The Emperor had no stomach for fighting left, his troops were hopelessly outnumbered, and his city was completely enveloped by "the Maratha army with the Ruhela troopers of Zābita Khan and the Jat soldiers and Samru's battalions and guns which had arrived to the aid of the Marathas." Against these could be put only the handful of Najaf's personal followers, the remnant of the defeated and dispirited new levies who had escaped the Maratha sword on the 17th. It was a situation which even a Najib-ud-daulah had not been able to save with better resources in 1757.

So, the Emperor made a complete surrender and signed a promise to grant all his enemy's demands. On the 19th peace parleys were opened by Hisām in the tents of Visāji and Tukoji ; on the 20th Dado Malhar (Visāji's diwan) and five other Maratha chiefs came to the Fort and held a secret conversation with the Emperor ; next day each party withdrew from its trenches below the

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* According to a newsletter (*CPC.* iv. 122), the Maratha army *cum* Zābita Khan's contingent was 35,000 strong, and a total of 3 to 4 thousand men fell on the two sides taken together. The Marathas captured 11 pieces of artillery, five elephants, and all the tents of Madec and Najaf.

city, but the discussion continued for some time longer, owing to the exorbitant nature of the Maratha demands. On the 26th the royal submission was consummated under the disguise of a gracious pardon. After having the Fort carefully searched to guard against treachery, Visāji, Tukoji and Zābita entered the Audience, each one's wrists tied together with a handkerchief like those of defeated and captured malefactors; they made the customary present of gold coins, and at the end of this mummery were given from the Emperor's side robes of honour, elephants and other presents. Zābita Khan was appointed Mir Bakhshi and restored to his paternal jagirs in Rohilkhand, Saharanpur and Mirat. On 2nd January 1773, the Maratha triumph was completed by the issue of an order dismissing Madec's battalions and the Mughalia horse and other troops newly raised by Najaf Khan.*

The settlement was, however, protracted by personal intrigue. Hisām knew that when his Maratha patrons were gone from Delhi, "Najaf would not leave him alive". He therefore bribed

* The capitulation signed by the Emperor contained the following terms: (1) The Emperor should not keep troops in excess of what was necessary for guarding himself. (2) He should restore to the Jats all the country that they had possessed before. (3) Zābita Kh. should be appointed Mir Bakhshi and given back all his territories conquered by the imperialists earlier in the year. (4) The Emperor should pay the Marathas Rs. [blank] as war expenses and cede the province of Kora Jahanabad. [Madec.]

them to expel Najaf from the Emperor's presence and service. "The Marathas, finding it impossible to realise the 25 lakhs promised to them by the Emperor in 1771, at last came down to nine lakhs, which Hisām paid in cash and kind, and in addition he promised Tukoji one lakh on condition of expelling Najaf." They also knew that the Mirzā was their one enemy and they dreaded his ability and strength of will so long as he was backed by the Emperor's authority. They, therefore, demanded that he should be dismissed by the Emperor and delivered up to them, or be forcibly expelled from the city along with the Mughalia horse. When this threat became known, the Mughalia soldiers from every part of the city flocked to Najaf's residence to guard him. Najaf put his house (Ismail Khan's mansion, close to the Mori Gate) in a posture of defence, and continued to live there in open defiance of the Emperor's order, saying that he was no longer a servant of the Government but a private person.

Hisām invited the Marathas to the city and mounted the imperial artillery on the Lahore Gate in order to expel the Mughalia supporters of Najaf (17th January.) Great disorder broke out in Delhi, with its inevitable accompaniment of loot and the sack of houses, on the 19th. The Marathas rode up the path on the river bank outside the city wall and stood ready opposite Najaf's residence, but they retired at sunset as

neither side advanced for fighting. Next day the city again throbbed with alarm in expectation of an armed conflict. But again Najaf Khan's good sense prevailed. He knew that he had not a single friend in the world except the mercenary Mughalias, no patron like the Durrāni Shah, no tribal followers, no territory and treasure of his own. He, therefore, agreed to the Maratha proposal to leave Delhi and join them with his contingent, on a pay of Rs. 3,000 a day, as their servant in their forthcoming invasion of Rohilkhand and Shujā's dominions.*

§ 17. *Ramghat expedition of Marathas and Najaf Khan.*

This settlement made, the Maratha sardars crossed into the Doab on 2nd February 1773, and Najaf Khan did the same the next day, with the Mughalia troops who had decided to follow him for a living. Zābita, too, joined his Deccani patrons and promised to help their enterprise in Rohilkhand with his local knowledge and influence. The allied force traversed the Doab rapidly and reached Rāmghāt, on the west bank of the Ganges, 40 miles south-east of Bulandshahar, on the 15th. Their object was to obtain peaceful possession of the districts of Kora and Allahabad, by virtue of the imperial rescript

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* *DC*. Madec. *Ibrat*. i. 219-222. Miskin 285-286. G. Ali iii. 14-18. Muna Lal 141-144.

granted to them. For this purpose they sent envoys to the Nawab of Oudh, demanding from him in his sovereign's name delivery of the lands he had usurped since 1765. They also called upon the trans-Ganges Ruhelas, especially Hāfiz Rahmat Khan, to pay up the indemnity promised in January 1771.

The Marathas at the very outset wished to avoid war. They knew that they were not strong enough for a regular campaign. Mahadji Sindhia with his 10,000 men had left them before their recent attack on Delhi; another force of 5,000 under Shivaji Vithal had been detached to Jhansi to meet the revolt against Maratha authority there fomented by the Gosains and local chiefs. Only 30,000 men were now left, equally divided between Visāji and Tukoji. The latter, true to the Holkar tradition of raiding tactics (*ghanimi qawāit*), proposed to make a dash on Faizabad (the seat of Shujā-ud-daulah), and capture that unwalled town in three days. But Visāji knew better. He knew that his allies Zābita and Najaf were secretly corresponding with Shujā, assuring him of their real antagonism to the Maratha interests and offering to go over to the Nawab of Oudh in the event of a clash of arms between the two sides. Even René Madec begged for returning to the Oudh service if the English would pardon his desertion from their army in 1764. [*CPC*. iv. 172, 183] Visāji, therefore, wanted to avoid war at all costs.

Ever since the Marathas had vacated Rohilkhand in May 1772, the Indian world knew it for certain that they would return there for collecting their dues next winter. Shujā knew that the Kora and Allahabad districts had been formally ceded to them, and he was not willing to disgorge these annexations. Hence, ever since that month he had kept making frantic appeals to his English protectors at Calcutta for the hire of British troops to defend these districts from the Marathas when they would come next. The Governor had assured him of such support. From Faizabad, by way of Lucknow, Shuja reached the bank of the Ganges opposite Cawnpur on 31st January, 1773. An English brigade composed of sepoys as well as white infantry, under Colonel Champion (the future conqueror of Rohilkhand) accompanied him. After the Marathas had arrived at Rāmghāt, the Nawab moved up the river towards them and encamped opposite Farrukhabad (3rd March). Here he was joined by more British troops and their commander-in-chief Sir Robert Barker himself. Marching further north, in response to the terrified calls of the Ruhelas, and covering long stages daily, the Anglo-Oudh force reached Sāhaswān, only 20 miles short of Rāmghāt, on the 19th. On that very day the Marathas at last embarked on war.*

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* Ramghat expedition.—Macpherson's *Soldiering in India* and *CPC*. iv (both fullest and best.) *DC*. *Aiti Tip*. vi 17.

There had been an angry scene in the invaders' camp on the west bank of the Ganges. The pacific Visāji Krishna, inspite of his high title of the supreme agent for Maratha interests in Hindustan, was powerless. Tukoji Holkar, as usual, by his bluster carried the day, and taking Najaf Khan with himself forded the Ganges there with his 15,000 light horse, while Visāji, with the other half of the army, stayed behind at the village of Bhelon, two miles west of the *ghat,* in charge of all the camp, heavy baggage and the accumulated spoils of three years' campaigning in the North. The Pindharis looted the country round. As a wise precaution, a bridge of boats had been thrown by the Marathas over the Ganges at Puth, 50 miles higher up the river, to provide a safe path for retreat.

§ 18. *Tukoji Holker raids Rohilkhand ; encounter with British troops.*

Arrived on the east bank of the Ganges, Tukoji attacked and captured Ahmad Khan (the son of Sardār Khan, the ex-Bakhshi of Ali Md. Ruhela), who had entrenched on the river side opposite Rāmghāt, with the fortalice of Asadpur behind him. The action was short and sharp ;

SPD. xxix. 278 and pp. 331-333, 341, 348 (Najaf Kh. engaged by the Marathas on Rs. 3,000 daily.) *Ibrat.* i. 222-228 (detailed.) Miskin 287-288 (present.) G. Ali, iii. 18-19 and Muna Lal 144-145 (meagre.) Bihari Lal. *Gulshan-i-Rahmat.*

the Ruhelas lost 300 out of their force of 2,000 men and the Marathas 900. But a son of Ahmad Khan held out in Asadpur, which Tukoji invested. The English army at Sāhaswān, warned by the heavy sound of firing at night, made a rapid march next day and arrived before Rāmghāt (20th March.) At the news of their approach, Tukoji abandoned the siege and made a lightning raid on Sambhal (35 miles north-east of Rāmghāt) and Morādābād, both of which large cities he plundered. Then, with equal speed, he fled back, crossing the Ganges at Puth, and rejoined Visāji at Aligarh.

We shall now return to the Maratha division left behind at Rāmghāt. At ten o'clock in the morning of 20th March, the English brigade advancing on Rāmghāt sighted the Marathas and immediately formed line of battle, all the troops priming and loading. At once a large body of Maratha horse hovering on the east bank crossed the Ganges back to Ramghat without a shot having been fired at them. Then some 3,000 of their cavalry appeared on the western bank, at first merely watching the movements of the English. After General Barker had pitched his tent, Visāji fired two 12 pounders across the river and dropped about 30 shots near this tent, killing an old woman and wounding an elephant. Two English guns immediately replied, the very second shot of which "fell among the thick of the enemy, upon which they turned tail in great confusion,

and a few more rounds made the whole of them quit the shore."

Early in the morning of the 22nd, the English general crossed the Ganges at the ford of Rāmghāt, Shujā-ud-daulah having sent in the preceding night twenty pieces of cannon to cover the advance and some 5,000 Najib infantry to occupy a good post on the west bank. But the news of the intended attack had reached Visāji and he had precipitately fled fourteen miles behind, leaving there only a few Pindharis rummaging among the abandoned things of his camp. The English encamped on the ground so long occupied by the enemy; their General advanced eight miles westwards without coming up with the enemy; he found only small bands of Pindharis hovering afar off and a large force of Maratha horse that watched the English "from a respectable distance." Hāfiz Rahmat Khan, who had so long maintained a dubious attitude towards Shujā, now came to the wazir's camp, and so also did several of Najaf Khan's officers who reported that the rest of their commanders would desert the infidels in groups of 20 or 30 at a time, as they found means of escape.

After halting on the west bank on the 22nd, the English brigade recrossed the river to their old ground, a mile from Rāmghāt, leaving a strong body to guard that ford. Next day, at the news that Holkar was raiding Morādābād, the brigade began a rapid march north-eastwards to the rescue

of the Ruhelas. At the end of the second day (26th March) news came that the Maratha raiders had fled back across the Ganges. So, General Barker returned to Rāmghāt on the 28th.

§ 19. *Settlement made by General Barker between the Marathas and the Ruhelas.*

In the meantime, during his absence the Marathas had tried to force the ford at Rāmghāt about 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the 27th, but they had been repulsed by the heavy guns and troops left there by the Nawab of Oudh under his eunuch Mahbub Ali Khan. This was the last Maratha raid into Rohilkhand, and just one year after it that province was for ever closed to them by being annexed to Oudh and thus brought under British protection.

The English brigade halted at Rāmghāt for 16 days more, and then marched north to a point opposite Anupshahar (30th April.) Before this the Maratha army had abandoned the Rāmghāt position on 28th March and retreated into the Doab, about 25 miles west of it. There was now an open rupture between Visāji and Tukoji, each of them blaming the other for this irreparable failure of Maratha enterprise in Hindustan after three years of effort (Feb. 1770—May 1773.) They lingered in the Etawa-Khurja region for some weeks, making preparations for their departure home. They buried all their heavy guns (the spoils of Pathargarh) near Etawa, and sent off much

of their booty ahead, to cross the Jamuna by a bridge of boats at Kālpi.* On 21st April, two wakils sent by the Marathas to treat for peace were introduced by Shujā to General Barker. Shujā satisfied the Marathas by promising that he would take written bonds for 15 lakhs from Hafiz Rahmat and for five lakhs from Ahmad Khan Bangash's son and thus discharge the war idemnity promised by the Afghans to the Marathas a year earlier. [*DC.*] But no agreement was made by the Ruhelas for paying any subsidy to the Nawab of Oudh for his armed assistance in the Rāmghāt campaign, over and above the forty lakhs promised to him in 1772.†

This arrangement having been made as the best of a bad job, the Maratha chiefs on 5th May dismissed Najaf Khan from Aligarh with gifts, a robe of honour, jewels and Rs. 26,000 in cash and a grant of 19 parganahs out of their fiefs in

* Capt. Macpherson writes: "15th April. News from the Maratha camp that for these two nights past they had had their horses saddled all night. Najaf Khan asked Tukoji if he intended to fight us; he replied that his men were much more inclined to plunder...18th. We are informed that the Marathas are very uneasy at their situation and that Visaji sent his Prime Minister Dado Malhar to Tukoji to accuse him of being the cause of commencing hostilities against the Wazir and English, which the other denied...(more quarrels between the two.)" [123-124.]

† For the Wazir's case, *CPC.* iv. 475, and Hāfiz Rahmat's reply, 481. Bihari Lal explains why the Ruhelas failed to pay Shujā as promised (*I.H.Q.* 1936.)

that region. Zābita Khan received his *congee* from Visāji Krishna four days later. Then the Marathas themselves set out for the Deccan by way of Etawa and Kālpi. Najaf Khan, after a visit to General Barker at the English camp opposite Anupshahar (9th May), returned to Delhi on 20th May.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOWNFALL OF THE JAT POWER, 1773—1776

§ 1. *Ministerial changes at Delhi. Rise of Abdul Ahad: his early career and character.*

The return of Mirza Najaf Khan to Delhi after the Maratha failure in Rohilkhand (20th May 1773) was followed by a revolution at Court. A sovereign like Shah Alam II, with no strength of character, energy or even personal courage, was bound to pass his life under the tutelage of some cleverer brain or stronger will. His administration was directed by one favourite after another. Munir-ud-daulah had dominated the exiled Court at Allahabad; but his influence depended solely on his enjoying the trust of the English authorities of Bengal and securing the smooth payment of the annual tribute of 26 lakhs promised in return for the diwani of the eastern provinces—which was now the sole support of the Emperor's household and officers. When that tribute fell into arrears, Munir's advocacy of every policy favoured by the English began to be counted as a sin and his fall was completed by his open opposition to the migration of the Court to Delhi on which the Emperor had set his heart. Saif-ud-din Muhammad Khan Kashmiri, (entitled Saif-ul-mulk), now rose to high favour. He conducted the pact with the Marathas for the

restoration of the monarch to his capital, took delivery of Delhi fort for his absent master from the Maratha hands, and acted as the chief minister during the march from Allahabad. But a fortnight after the royal entry into Delhi he was supplanted by Hisām-ud-daulah, evidently because he had no administrative capacity and could not satisfy the Emperor's pressing need of money from the revenue but had spent all the collections in keeping together the army that formed the imperial escort to Delhi.

Hisām who had been the jealous rival of Munir-ud-daulah during the royal sojourn in Allahabad, achieved no better success in filling the Exchequer, and he was ruined by his pro-Maratha policy during the attack on Delhi in December 1772. The failure of the Marathas to divide the rich spoils of Rohilkhand equitably with the Emperor and even to maintain their military predominance in Hindustan, necessarily involved their partisans at Court in their discredit. Najaf Khan, who had advocated a directly opposite policy which the Emperor had rejected in favour of Hisām's, was now triumphantly vindicated, and Hisām fell entirely out of favour. Moreover, Najaf was a former *protege* and constant friend of the English, and his influence over them would be very useful in securing the restoration of the Bengal tribute of 26 lakhs which the Bengal Governors had stopped after the great famine of 1770. The cession of

Kora and Allahabad to the Marathas, brought about by Hisām, had antagonised the English and he stood condemned for this diplomatic false step. Now that the Marathas were happily gone out of Hindustan covered with failure and disgrace, Najaf Khan was the proper person to restore the broken friendship between the Emperor and the English. He was also the only general capable of recovering the imperial dominions and suspended tributes from the Jats and other upstart rebels, while Hisām was no soldier.

So, Najaf Khan on returning to Delhi was received in audience (20th May 1773) with the highest honours; and at his recommendation Abdul Ahad Khan was appointed deputy wazir two days later, *vice* Hisām-ud-daulah whose title of nobility was taken away and his name reduced to plain Hisām-ud-din. This Abdul Ahad Khan (now ennobled as Majd-ud-daulah Bahrām Jang) had at first been a servant of Najib-ud-daulah and posted at Delhi under Najib's representative in that city to act as a channel of communication with the Queen-mother and the Crown Prince who were living at the capital during Shah Alam's exile. He had acted as the bearer of these two august personages' message to the absent Emperor in September 1769 and also as Najib's envoy to the Marathas in the Doab in April 1770. After Najib's death he had borne Zābita Khan company and conveyed his new master's presents and

proposals to the Emperor on his way to Delhi (19 November 1771.) On the fall of Pathargarh and the flight of Zābita, he had come out of that fort and had received the Emperor's formal pardon for having been a rebel's follower (30th March 1772.) For a year after this he hung about the Court without employment, though his speech and manners charmed the Emperor. At last the supple Kashmiri won Najaf Khan over to his interests by vowing to be his faithful follower and supporter at Court ever afterwards and thus secured the Premiership (22nd May 1773.)*

Abdul Ahad was a courtier after the Emperor's heart, with the smooth polish, perfect suavity of temper and false bewitching tongue of a typical Kashmiri Muslim, and he soon grew into the best loved personal friend and private companion of Shah Alam. But he was no soldier, no ruler of men, and his natural weapons of duplicity and covert intrigue broke hopelessly down when coming in contact with the hard facts of life in that troubled and changeful world.

On 5th June 1773 Mirzā Najaf was appointed Second Paymaster General, the titular Mir

* *DC. Ibrat.* i. 228. G. Ali iii. 21-28. Miskin 288. Muna Lal 146. These dates are taken from the contemporary Persian sources and therefore the patent of nobility given to René Madec really belongs to the year 1774. (Barbé pp. 289-91, dates incorrect.)

CPC. ii. 178, 626, 987 (Saifuddin had incurred a debt of 12 lakhs for the Emperor's journey to Delhi.) *Siyar,* iii. 85.

Bakhshi Zābita Khan being an absentee like the nominal wazir Shujā-ud-daulah whose actual functions were discharged by Abdul Ahad Khan as his deputy at Court. On the same day Hisām, who had been dismissed from this latter office, was thrown into prison, but Najaf Khan with his usual moderation and foresight got his fallen rival released, five days later, by pleading with the Emperor, took him to his own house and there set him to render account of his management of the royal treasury (Crownlands) during his year of chancellorship. The ex-minister compounded for the claims against him by paying six lakhs to the Emperor and three to Najaf Khan. Mahdi Quli Khan, who had oppressed and fleeced the Delhi people during Imād-ul-mulk's wazirship and had later flourished under the protection of Hisām, was thrown into prison on the downfall of his patron (14th June), and after a month of beating, was tortured to death by being chained to the leg of an elephant and dragged through the streets of Delhi (12 July.) [Muna Lal 148-149. *Ibrat.* i. 229, 243-244. *DC.*]

§ 2. *Mirza Najaf's new army; his military superiority.*

Secure, at least for a time, from the back-biting and intrigues of envious rivals, Mirzā Najaf set himself to raising a new army for the Emperor, with his usual energy and success. His reputation drew out of work veterans and ambitious

young recruits from all sides, and his task was rendered easier by the help of a number of very able and devoted lieutenants that he had gathered round himself, such as Najaf Quli Khan and Afrāsiyāb Khan (these two being popularly called his adopted sons) and Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, besides former Mughalia captains like Qilich Beg, Niyāz Beg, Mirzā Beg, Badal Beg, and our invaluable memoir-writer Tahmāsp Khan (who used the pen-name of *Miskin*.) Mulla Rahimdād with 3,000 Ruhelas in a state of utter destitution,—without clothing on their backs, arms in their hands, or armour on their persons,—entered Najaf's service to avoid starvation. The country round Delhi, especially the Baluch colonies in Mewāt, was beaten for recruits and the response was prompt and ample. In a short time the assembled force exceeded 20,000 men.

The question now arose how to feed and equip them. The Treasury was empty. An attack upon the Jat Rajah, known to be the richest vassal in the north, was the only resource left, now that the attempt to squeeze Zābita Khan had failed. The vast new army if left unpaid would form a constant danger to the peace of Delhi, and therefore Abdul Ahad gave Najaf two lakhs of Rupees on condition of leading these men out on a Jat expedition. One lakh more was raised by Najaf's two lieutenants as a loan on their personal security. The new army was thus equipped and set out against Nawal Singh. It was agreed that

the territory and booty seized would be shared equally between the Emperor and his general. Najaf Khan was also appointed subahadar of the yet to be reconquered province of Agra in addition to his Deputy Paymastership.

His military superiority lay in his copious supply of artillery, rockets and smaller fire arms, six battalions of sepoy musketeers,—two of them trained by the English and the others organised and led by commandants who had previously seen service under Europeans,—his assemblage of the remnants of the old Badakhshis (all veterans familiar with Durrāni warfare) and a large body of desperate Ruhela soldiers who had been disbanded after Najib-ud-daulah's death and the downfall of his son. He had, besides, the benefit of the advice of very competent European generals, such as Major Polier, an expert military engineer highly praised by Hastings, in the campaign of January 1774, and René Madec and the Comte de Modave in the war of 1775-1776. Above all shone his own undoubted genius for war and diplomacy and power of controlling men.*

§ 3. *Causes of the decline of the Jat military power.*

Against such an adversary, the Jats were hopelessly outclassed. They had not adopted the

* Miskin 283. *Ibrat.* i. 229.

combined tactics and disciplined use of firearms which the Europeans had introduced into Indian warfare ; they had even lost the high level of efficiency in the indigenous style of fighting to which Suraj Mal had raised them. All their veteran captains were dead. Jawahir Singh's ruthless selfishness had destroyed most of their leading chiefs, and time had removed the rest. No younger men had risen to take the places of these. Their Rajah was a weak voluptuary, lacking even the brute courage of his ancestry. And his Government was torn by family dissensions, the factious opposition of his brothers and uncles, and the open defection of Balu Jat's sons. Of his European retainers, Madec had been seduced by the Emperor in October 1772 and Sombre was to be in May 1774.

Under Suraj Mal the Jat power had successfully defied the great Durrāni Shāh by a policy of pure defensive. But they now failed to play such a game by reason of Mirzā Najaf's rapidity of strokes, masterly use of the time factor, and sharp turning on strategic lines. The campaign of 1773-74 and that of 1775-76 ended in unmitigated disaster for the house that Suraj Mal had raised to supreme eminence in Hindustan. The murder of the Peshwa Narayan Rao on 30th August 1773 and the intestine and foreign wars in which the Puna Government was next involved, prevented any Maratha advance north of the Chambal for eleven years after it,

and thus kept the ring clear for the combat between the Delhi Government and its refractory Jat vassal.

§ 4. *Dān Shāh Jāt and Chandu Gujar defeated in the Doab, Sep. 1773.*

Najaf's invasion of the Jat homeland was preceded by a smaller trial of strength in the Doab* immediately south-east of Delhi (in the Bulandshahar district.) The armed preparations in Delhi during the monsoons had not escaped the Jat Rajah's notice. By his order his forces in the Doab, then commanded by Dān Shāh, the best general left to him, and Chandu Gujar the governor of Aligarh, advanced from their base at Dankaur and ravaged the imperial territory from Sikandrabad to Ghaziabad (1-2 September 1773.) At the arrival of this news, Najaf Khan despatched from Delhi a strong detachment of 6000 Mughalia horse (under Tāj Md. Baluch and Niyāz Beg) and two battalions of English-trained sepoys (under Rāmru commandant) with a good supply of guns and rockets (7th September.) When this force reached Shāhdara, the Jat raiders hurriedly fell back on their base, the imperialists giving chase and every day slaying their stragglers and capturing their camp property.

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* Doab campaign.—*DC. Ibrat.* i. 213-214 (wrongly places in 1772.) G. Ali iii. 29-33. *Chahar Gulzar* 492 *b*-493*a* (full.) *CPC.* iv. 558.

Outside Dankaur, the Jats turned at bay in a strong position protected by pits and hillocks and offered battle (16th Sept.) "Chandu Gujar led a charge upon the imperial artillery. But the guns fired grape and the sepoy battalions delivered volleys from their muskets rank after rank with exact precision. The Jat light horse which had never expected this, were shot down in large numbers. Chandu Gujar, though wounded, broke into the sepoy ranks and was bayoneted," and the broken remnant of the Jat vanguard fled away. Meantime Dān Shāh had crossed the stream with a few thousand horsemen and fallen upon the imperial rearguard. Here a long and obstinate hand to hand fight took place, but at last the Jats were routed by a bold counter attack led by Tāj Md. Khan. Dān Shāh himself fled away wounded. Over 3,000 Jats perished in this campaign. Large quantities of spoils fell into the victors' hands, and that region was cleared of Jat authority. The detachment crossed back to the west bank of the Jamuna and joined Najaf.

§ 5. *Mirza Najaf invades Jat country; successful advance.*

The Mughal generalissimo had himself set out from Delhi on 24th September and entered his tents at Bārapula. He took very happy auspices for his projected campaign by capturing the mud fort of Maidāngarhi, which Suraj Mal

had built, as if in supreme defiance of the imperial authority, only 13 miles south of Delhi ($1\frac{3}{4}$ miles south of the Qutb minār.) Najaf's heavy fire drove the rustic garrison from the walls and the fortalice was taken by a single assault of infantry clambering over the mud walls sword in hand. In another quarter, a Jat detachment from Farrukhnagar attacking the *garhi* of Harsaru was defeated and despoiled by the Mirzā's lieutenant Najaf Quli Khan, on 5th October.*

Marching from Delhi by way of Bārapula and Badarpur, Najaf Khan reached Ballabhgarh, 25 miles south of the capital. Here he received a highly important accession to his strength in the person of Ajit and Hirā Singh, the dispossessed heirs of the founder of that great fort, —the northernmost bulwark of the expanded Jat kingdom. They offered to assist the invaders with their local knowledge and influence if Najaf Khan would promise to restore their patrimony to them after it had been wrested from the Jat Rajah's agents. The defection of such men at the very outset of the campaign "broke the waist of Nawal Singh's resolution", and he fell back from his first post at Bāwni-Kherā (six miles south of Palwal) to Banchāri, nine miles further south,

* Maidangarhi.—*Ibrat.* i. 212 (year wrong.) G. Ali. iii. 34. *Chahar Gulz.* 492b. Najaf's advance.—*DC. Ibrat.* i. 231-234. G. Ali iii. 36-39. *Chahar Gulzar* 492*b*-493*b*. Muna Lal 151. *CPC.* iv. 628.

where he entrenched his camp. While Mirzā Najaf himself halted at Sikri-Fathpur Biloch, five miles south of Ballabhgarh and nine miles north of Palwal, his captain Najaf Quli, newly arrived from his successful operations in Mewāt, was sent off with the vanguard (8th October) to clear the way. This captain advanced, daily fighting skirmishes and driving back the Jat patrols. Nowhere was any defence offered, and the villages in the north Jat territory lay helpless before the invaders. "As the autumn crop was then ripe, the Nawab's soldiers fed themselves and their horses on the standing millet crop along their route. They plundered every village that lay in their path, set fire to it, and carried off all the cattle and sheep &c., which they sold at low prices or ate ; especially the beggarly Ruhelas of Mullā Rahim-dād, whose leanness turned into fatness from eating the plundered provisions, and whose appearance after being clothed in plundered apparel changed from the look of wild beasts to that of human beings." [*Ibrat,* i. 231, Miskin 290.]

So greatly were the Jat troops demoralised by the example of their craven chief that one day (10th October) they abandoned their camp at Banchāri in a ridiculous panic: "while they were at their midday meal, they mistook a dust cloud on the west for the approach of Najaf Khan's army and fled away in fear, leaving their entire camp standing. The cloud moved like a spiral. The

villagers of Banchāri, on seeing the helpless condition of the fugitives, looted their camp. On the news of this reaching Najaf Khan's encampment in the rear, every man went out of it and looted what remained of the Jat camp, and at night fell back to their own base." [*Ibrat*, 233-'34.] Nawal Singh took refuge near Kotban, 4 miles south of Hodal (and 8 miles s. e. of Banchāri),—amidst its abundance of jungles and broken ground.

Mirzā Najaf, profiting by the advice of his two Jat allies, decided not to attack Nawal Singh there, but to manœuvre him out of his position and force him to offer battle at a disadvantage. Leaving Kotban in his rear, he turned aside and marched sacking the villages in the Chhata and Sahar parganahs further south and east. Vast quantities of spoils in cash and kind were taken here. At this, Nawal Singh issued from Kotban to the plain east of Barsānā, 14 miles in the south. Najaf's base was now near Sahar, seven miles east of Barsānā.

§ 6. *Battle before Barsana; Jat disaster. Fall of Kotban.*

After skirmishes for ten days, the decisive battle was fought on 30th October, midway between Sahar and Barsānā.* This was the first

* Battle.—*Chahar Gulz.* 493*b*. *Ibrat.* i. 236-240. G. Ali iii 40-44. *DC. CPC.* iv. 638. Sack of Chhata, G. Ali iii : 38.

battle in Upper India (outside the Bengal Presidency) in which sepoy battalions drilled by Europeans and European-trained gunners were ranged on both sides. Hence the contest was prolonged and the mortality exceptionally heavy; the victors lost 2,300 men in killed and wounded, and the Jats about 2,000, but Sombre's battalions were severely cut up. The Jat army was thus drawn up:—a strong force (probably 5,000) of Nāgā monks armed with muskets under Bālānand Gosain on the left, Nawal Singh himself with his Jat clansmen in the centre, and nine battalions of sepoys under Sombre with their artillery on the right. The Jat Rajah's own guns were ranged in front of the centre and chained together for breaking cavalry attacks. The imperial right was formed by Rahim-dād Khan and his 5,000 Ruhelas; in the centre Najaf Quli was placed with the Mughalia horse; on the left four battalions of disciplined sepoys under Razā Beg Khan and Rahim Beg, commandants; the artillery formed the first line. Like a modern general Mirzā Najaf deviated from the old Indian practice, and mounted a fleet horse instead of an elephant, so as to be able to gallop to any threatened point and push up succours wherever needed. On his own elephant he placed Masum

Ch. Gulz. 493*a*.) Sack of Mathura by Najaf Quli (*Ch. Gulz.* 494*a*.) *Ibrat.* names the battlefield *Shāhpur,* which I cannot find by local inquiry. (? Tatarpur).

Ali Khan, who was naturally mistaken by the enemy for the generalissimo and paid for the false personation with his life. Between the rival forces a dense plantation of tall millets intervened.

The battle began shortly after noon with an exchange of artillery fire which lasted for four hours. Then, with only one hour of sunlight remaining, the two sides closed together. The Ruhela infantry on the Mughal right charged the Nāgās, who fired volleys in succession ; but the Ruhelas dodged the bullets by promptly falling down on the ground, then rising up and resuming their run, till they came up with the Nāgās before they could load again. After a bloody combat, the Nāgās broke with the loss of a thousand of their men. At the other end of the line the Emperor's sepoy battalions advanced against Sombre's. "The former had reserved their fire till they would come to close quarters, but fate did not give them the necessary time for it. The first salvo of Sombre's guns killed these two commandants, and their sepoys threw their muskets down and hid themselves among the tall crops." This was the crisis of the battle. But Najaf's superior generalship gave him the victory over the inert and timid Jat chief. The Mirzā, on seeing his left wing dissolved, galloped up to his centre and ordered that division (all cavalry) to charge the Jat centre. The Mughalia horse, cutting passages through the line of linked enemy guns in front, attacked Nawal Singh at the gallop.

Here the Rajputs and Jats offered a desperate defence. But Nawal Singh's heart failed him as usual, he fled away, and his centre division ceased to struggle any longer.

The victorious imperialists, including even their higher officers, at once dispersed for plunder, as the fabulously rich Jat royal camp was just behind the field of action. But the battle had not yet been won; Sombre maintained his position, forming his infantry into squares and working his guns in front. Under shelter of this disciplined force, Jodhrāj the Jat diwān formed his 500 horse ready for action. Najaf, mad with vexation at the disorderly conduct of his troops, with only a few personal attendants round him made a charge upon Jodhrāj's horse, carefully skirting Sombre's sepoys. He himself received a spear thrust which penetrated his armour and cut his left thigh open to the bone; but Jodhrāj was routed. Then only did Sombre withdraw from the field, his sepoys marching away with the utmost steadiness and order. They were saved by a splendid rearguard action fought by his French second-in-command, who coolly kept his place and repelled charge after charge of the Mughal horse by the discharge of his guns. At last Najaf Khan succeeded in hunting out a number of his plundering artillerymen and turned a gun upon the enemy, the second shot of which killed this gallant Frenchman. Then all resistance ceased; but there was no pursuit; discipline

and European leadership saved Samru's sepoys even in the midst of such a complete defeat.

The Mughal army now marched on to Nawal Singh's camp which had been left standing with its "wealth beyond imagination". The spoils included all the Jat artillery, elephants, horses and camels, besides money and apparel. The newly built city of Barsānā was sacked and reduced to a state of ruin which continued for more than a century. "The famished Mughalia troopers appeased their hunger no longer with the growing crops, but with good cooked meals." The imperialists halted at Barsānā for some days in order to attend to the many hundreds of their wounded comrades and to secure the unmanageably immense spoils of victory.

In the strategic moves before this battle, the imperialists had marched southwards along the eastern route from Hodal by Chhata and Sahar, leaving Kotban untaken behind them. But after the utter wreck of the Jat field force at Barsānā, Mirzā Najaf's first care was to secure his rear by sending a detachment under Rahim-dād against Kotban which was held by Sitārām, the father-in-law of Nawal Singh. Strong reinforcements arrived under Najaf Quli to assist in the siege. The place was now completely invested and its provision supply cut off. After 19 days, Sitārām silently evacuated it one night (end of November), and next morning the imperialists gained possession of it with all its guns and "immense quantities

of provisions powder and shot, tents, &c." [*Ibrat*, i. 240-'2. *Ch. Gulz.* 493b.]

§ 7. *Najaf Khan captures Agra fort.*

Thereafter the Mughal generalissimo gave up the plan of pursuing Nawal Singh and wasting months in the siege of his impregnable forts. He made a sharp turn to the east and arrived before Agra on 11th December. The city gave him peaceful possession as his firmness saved its people from plunder and molestation. He owed several months' pay to his army, but he nobly rejected the proposal of his lieutenant to wipe off his heavy debt by giving his soldiers licence to sack the city. The *fort* of Agra,* however, held out under its Jat commandant, a brother of Dān Shāh. But even this great fortress of Akbar could make no prolonged defence, thanks to Najaf Khan's good fortune. This needs explanation.

By the treaty of Benares (7th Sept. 1773) Shujāuddaulah had secured from Warren Hastings an assurance of British armed aid in the defence of his own territory and in his projected annexation of Rohilkhand. The news of the murder of the Peshwa Narayan Rao whetted his

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* Najaf's siege of Agra.—*DC.* Muna Lal 152. G. Ali. iii. 45-51. *Ibrat.* i. 245-249. *Ch. Gulzar* 493*b*. *CPC.* iv. 904. 907 (11) Etawa.—*CPC.* iv. 731, 736. *SPD.* xxix. 263.

appetite for extending his own dominions in the Doab by seizing the now defenceless Maratha possessions there. [*CPC*. iv. 584 & 626.] No interference was to be feared from the Deccanis, now entangled in their homeland for years to come. The Jat Rajah, left half dead by the Maratha expedition of 1770, was going to be crushed by Mirza Najaf Khan from Delhi. As the imperial attack developed, Nawal Singh made frantic appeals to Shujā—as he did to Zābita and every other enemy of Najaf—to save him. But the loyal service of Suraj Mal to Safdar Jang was forgotten; Shujā's one aim was to fish in these troubled waters and embark on a career of annexation, now that he was secure about his own realm. The Jat Rajah even offered to cede the fort of Agra to Shujā as the price of his aid in saving the rest of his kingdom from Najaf Khan. So, Shujā marched into the Doab with a large army and began to approach towards Agra, after wresting Etawa from its weak Maratha garrison (*circa* 15 Dec.) by a siege of four days.

But Najaf Khan's rapid and decisive success against the Jats foiled the Oudh Nawab's plans. His siege of Agra at first made no progress owing to his want of breaching guns, and he called on Shujā for help in the name of their common master and religion. In response, Shujā detached a large force with many sepoy battalions and heavy artillery in charge of Major Polier (a Swiss engineer of high capacity) and the eunuch Basant

Ali Khan, from the Doab. Taking over the siege trenches opposite the Shāh-burj, Polier heavily bombarded the fort. By the 8th of February 1774, five thousand balls had been fired on the walls. "The wall of the Bangala-burj was soon cracked and the stones began to roll down like tulip petals during a strong wind." The garrison lost heart, though they had already inflicted a loss of 300 men on the Mughal side. On 13th February the Jat commandant came out and interviewed Mirzā Najaf. Terms were quickly arranged and he agreed to vacate the fort in return for safety to life and property. He took back with himself a guard from Razā Beg's battalion, who set up the Emperor's flag and outpost at the fort gate. Safety was proclaimed to the inmates. In five days the fort was completely evacuated and Mirzā Najaf entered it, on 18th February. Shujā was baulked of his prey just in time.

At Shujā's request to the Emperor to join him in the expedition against the Pār Ruhelas and divide the conquest equally with him, the Emperor sent Najaf Khan to the Nawab of Oudh for settling the terms and removing a certain misunderstanding created between Najaf and the Nawab by mischief-makers. The Mirzā met Shujā at Etawa on 27th Feb. and received a royal welcome, with gifts worth a lakh of Rupees and the offer of the deputy wazirship at the royal Court on his behalf. He was pressed to induce the Emperor to join the Rohilkhand expedition

in person and thus give the royal sanction to this war of aggression. Najaf hurried back to Delhi in the company of Shujā's agent Elich Khan (28 March.) The Emperor set out from his palace on 5th April, and proceeded as far as Ghāziabad when his own weak health and the severe illness of his favourite son Akbar Shah made him give up the journey and return (16 April.) Najaf Khan, however, was given *congee* for the Oudh Nawab's camp and actually set out from Shāhdara on the 22nd. But he was too late to be of any use to Shujā, who had crushed the Ruhelas at Mirān Katra on the 23rd of this very month. Najaf, after interviewing Shujā, came back to Delhi with empty hands (12 June.) The Emperor had done nothing for Shujā and could expect nothing from the spoils of Rohilkhand, though the imperial band in Delhi palace played joyous notes for this victory of his wazir over rebels to his throne!

We may here note other Jat losses at this time. The fort of Ballabhgarh was captured from the Jat Rajah's garrison on 20th April 1774, and Farrukhnagar on 6th May. Worst of all, Sombre deserted the Jat service with his trained battalions and well-equipped artillery and came over to the Emperor on 20th May. He was sent to bring the Panipat district back to obedience. Next month René Madec joined Najaf Khan. [*CPC.* iv. 1184.]

§ 8. *How Abdul Ahad set the Emperor against Mirza Najaf.*

Meantime, Abdul Ahad Khan, after gaining unrivalled sway over the Emperor's mind, was playing a double game. He pointed out that all the conquests made by Mirza Najaf had merely aggrandised him without bringing the least gain in territory or revenue to the Emperor, though the Emperor's personal troops had cooperated with Najaf's in making these acquisitions. The Emperor's poverty had, in fact, only deepened in consequence of Najaf's adventures.* The districts round Delhi, north and west, which had formerly belonged to the privy purse, as well as the recent conquests from the Jats, namely south and south-west of Delhi and in the middle Doab, had all been appropriated by the Mirzā's officers on the plea of providing their soldiers' pay. At the same time the rapid growth of Najaf's armed forces and military prestige, after his brilliant victory over Zābita and Nawal Singh, constituted a serious danger to the Emperor's security. What if this Persian adventurer should

* In June 1774 the Emperor wrote to Col. Champion that during the last three years the income from his territories had shrunk to 12 or 14 lakhs annually, and that the recent Sikh raids and drought had reduced the collection of revenue still further. [*CPC.* iv. 1152.] His household expenses were Rs. 1¼ lakhs and that of his guards &c. over 2½ lakhs a month. [*Ibid.* 913.]

imitate Najibuddaulah, appropriate all the forces and revenue of what still remained of the Empire, and reduce the Emperor to the position of an impotent beggar dependent on his vassal's charity? Then Shah Alam would be even worse off than he had been under the regency of Najib-ud-daulah,—because he had now broken with the English, destroyed the bridge for his return to their shelter, and lost the annual tribute of 26 lakhs promised by them. Mirzā Najaf was a Shia and a kinsman of the Nawab of Oudh. Oudh was now insured against all danger by British bayonets, its territory had expanded northwards up to the Himalayas by the recent annexation of Rohilkhand and westwards across the Ganges into the Etawa district of the Doab, within easy reach of Agra. Mirza Najaf, though once threatened with death by Shujā, had now made up with him and become his favourite. What was more natural than for these two Shias to join forces together, march upon Delhi, and reduce the Emperor to bondage as the Sayyid brothers,—Shias like them—had done sixty years earlier?

Abdul Ahad fomented these suspicions of the timid Emperor. He suggested, as a counter-poise to Najaf, the raising of Zābita Khan to the imperial Paymastership and actual control of the Delhi army. He forgot that Zābita was a broken reed, as the utter extinction of his power by the Marathas in 1772 had proved. Zābita was

presented to the Emperor by Abdul Ahad on 9th October 1773 and kept at Court for some time during Najaf Khan's absence on the Jat war. But he realised that he could do nothing to counteract Mirzā Najaf or spoil his Jat enterprise; so he retired to his jagir on 22nd November, leaving his son behind as his agent. Soon afterwards (January 1774) the Ruhela chief was kept busy by the Sikh raids into the upper Doab, and could return to the Court only on the same day as Najaf Khan (12th June).

§ 9. *Najaf stays in Delhi, counteracting Court intrigues.*

From 12th June 1774 to 21st April 1775 Mirza Najaf remained in Delhi; all his energy paralysed by Court intrigues, and the utmost he could do was to keep his head above the water. The Emperor demanded from him (i) a division of his new conquests with his sovereign, (ii) the delivery of Agra fort to the Emperor's nominee, and (iii) the reduction of his army to a number consistent with his rank as a servant. The other causes of friction were (iv) Najaf Khan's wilful use of the Chancellor's seal (entrusted to him by Shujā who had made him Deputy Wazir) and granting sanads for lands and offices without consulting the sovereign, and (v) his seduction of Sombre from the Emperor's service to his own.

Throughout August 1774 discussions on these points went on between the two sides, without any result. Early in September the Mughalia captains made a friendly intervention; Najaf agreed to give up a share of the conquered lands and the keys of Agra fort to the Emperor, who promised in return to confirm him in the post of Deputy Wazir; these captains stood security for Najaf's fulfilment of his conditions. But this settlement proved a hollow truce; the quarrel broke out afresh as Abdul Ahad taxed his hated rival with breach of faith and usurpation of Crownlands, seduction of the royal troops and the raising of inordinate forces.* One day (*circa* 15 Oct.) Mirzā Najaf was insulted by the imperial guards, who under Ahad's general orders refused him admission into the fort of Delhi when he came to attend the darbār. [*CPC*. iv. 1359.] For two months after this the Mirzā sulked in his mansion, keeping away from the Court altogether. At last (22 Dec.) the Emperor brought the two ministers together and reconciled them in his presence. They exchanged visits; but the agreement was merely superficial and the mutual bickerings broke out again. Abdul Ahad had brought Zābita to Court

* Long list of charges against Najaf. *CPC*. iv. 1360. Also 973, 912, 1184 (has raised too vast an army.) Shuja defends Najaf, 1362.

once more on 18th November, and sent imperial letters inviting the Sikhs and the Marathas to the Presence for entering the royal service and reconquering the lost dominions. All these plots failed through the Kashmiri's weakness of nerve and lack of political insight. If the Mirzā was to be crushed it could be done only by a rival capable of taking the field at the head of a superior army. Abdul Ahad had no stomach for warfare; he could not leave Delhi and Waziran, a professional dancing-girl whom he had married and who was the only solace of his grey beards; so, he went on weaving very fine cobwebs of intrigue and moving his pawns like Zābita and the Sikhs on the political chess-board for checkmating his martial rival, who merely laughed when these plots were reported to him by his spies. Zābita left the Court on 16 Jan. 1775, and the Sikhs employed that winter in raiding the lands of loyal subjects of the Empire and rebellious vassals with equal vigour.

Early in the year 1775 Mirzā Najaf fell ill and was confined to bed for months together. The Emperor paid him a visit of consolation on 4th April. On the 21st of the same month, Najaf, being somewhat recovered, left Delhi on his second Jat campaign. He had already drawn to his side Sombre and Madec with their regular battalions and improved artillery, and soon afterwards received the adhesion of the Comte

de Modave, though this last partisan leader could raise no force of his own.*

§ 10. *Najaf invades Jat-land again, 1775. First stage of campaign : capture of Kama ; victory and reverse.*

Mirzā Najaf's second Jat campaign (1775-1776) need not be described in detail, though we possess full accounts of it, unequalled by any other Indian war, from the pens of two eyewitnesses,—the graphic memoir-writer Tahmāsp Khan Miskin and that highly cultured keenly observant and marvellously acute European critic the Comte de Modave.

From his sick bed in Delhi Mirzā Najaf had sent his trusted lieutenants Afrāsiyāb Khan and Najaf Quli Khan into the middle Doab and Mewāt respectively for attacking the Jat possessions there. The former conquered parganahs Sadabad, Jewar &c., and after a three months' siege secured the capitulation of Rāmgarh, the strongest Jat fort in the Doab, by a money composition (April 1775), and named it Aligarh after the patron saint of these Shias. At exactly the same time, on the south-western front Najaf Quli captured the fort of Kāmā belonging to Jaipur, by a reckless assault under his subordinate Mullā

* *DC. Ibrat.* i. 250-251. G. Ali iii. 50-58. Muna Lal 158-162. *CPC.* iv. 1241, 1267, 1277, 1291 (besides those cited before.)

Rahim-dād and other Ruhelas. At the latter place a contribution of 25 lakhs was exacted from the rich traders who had taken shelter there.

The loss of Kāmā roused the Rajah of Jaipur; he formed an alliance with the Jat Rajah and hired a few thousand Maratha horse who had been left in Hindustan to collect tribute, and directed this vast force to recover Kāmā at any cost. The danger brought Mirza Najaf from Delhi to the scene; he recalled his detachments from the Doab and encamped near Barsānā. The Jats, on their part, advanced from Dig and entrenched a position some miles south of the imperialists. After petty skirmishes for some days, a battle on a larger scale took place on 18th May, when some 3,000 Mughal horse advanced without their commander too far into a defile near the enemy's position and were heavily outnumbered and hard pressed by the enemy. After some exchange of musket fire they effected a safe retreat, though pursued by the Marathas and Rajputs. The total loss on the two sides mounted up to a thousand men, besides hundreds of horses. However, the Jat army was eventually forced to take refuge in the fort of Dig and could not be tempted to come out.*

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* Najaf's second Jat campaign—Modave (tr. by me in *Bengal Past & Present*, 1936.) Madec's *Mémoire*. *DC*. G. Ali iii. 59-60, 87-92. Miskin 303-314, 317-320. Muna Lal 162-165, 172. *Ibrat*. i. 261-274, 276-285. *CPC*. iv. 1886. v. 306, 370.

Nawal Singh lay dying of a long illness and the Jat defence was conducted by his younger brother Ranjit Singh. During this interval Sombre's diplomacy succeeded; he had opened negotiations with the Jaipur leaders and very quickly effected a settlement, the Rajputs agreeing to abandon the cause of the Jats and march away on condition of Kāmā being restored to them in return for Rupees seven lakhs to be paid down and a promise of eleven lakhs of tribute to the imperial Government every year. [Modave 256.] The fort of Kāmā with its environs had been promised by the Mughal general to Rahim-dād Khan as an incentive to his efforts for its capture, but after the conquest the promise was not kept and the fort was handed back to the Rajputs. Rahim-dād in disgust went over to the Jats with his veteran Ruhela corps.

On 10th June the imperialists got a fine opportunity and promptly seized it. It was a holy day of the Hindus, being the tenth of the new moon in the month of Jyaishtha, and the Jat Rajah went from Dig to the sacred city of Govardhan for a ritual bath. His forces were strung out north of his route in order to guard against any enemy attack. Najaf Khan, who had got intelligence of this design, marched south from Barsānā in two divisions,—Madec with two battalions on the extreme right (i.e., west) bearing down upon Dig, and Najaf himself in the extreme left (east) bound for Govardhan, some seven miles

separating the two. The encounter took place at Guhāna, five miles north north-east of Dig. The hordes of Jat and Ruhela horse attacked Madec, but Afrāsiyāb Khan, detached from the Mughal left with reinforcements to Madec's corps, made a counter charge ; the enemy broke and fled, and the imperialists reunited and returned to their camp. Near Govardhan Najaf Khan too had achieved a victory, routing the enemy and capturing many horses, camels and carts from them. After this Nawal Singh's Rajput and Maratha allies totally forsook his sinking cause.

Mirzā Najaf Khan had arrived before Kāmā at the beginning of May. Here he had been joined by three battalions of trained sepoys from Oudh ; but these aids were recalled by their master after a short while. Mirzā Najaf, weakened by this loss, fell back some sixteen miles to Hodal. His soldiers, starving from their pay being in arrears, supported themselves by plundering the villages around, and "thus gained strength". Then he moved forward again and made Barsānā his permanent camp, sending out raiding parties towards Dig every day, as "there was not one Rupee in his coffers". In August he shifted his camp to Govardhan.

The rainy season had arrived already and put an end to active operations. But during this interval, René Madec was overwhelmed by disaster. He had gone to defend his jagir of Bāri. which had been invaded by Mullā Rahim-

dād in the Jat interest. Some ten miles from Fathpur-Sikri his rain-drenched troops were surprised by the Ruhelas (29th July) and routed with the loss of all their artillery, camp and equipage, and half his Europeans and 1,000 sepoys killed. The next two months he had to spend in building up and training a new contingent at Agra. [Barbé 231. Modave. *Ibr.*]

§ 11. *Ranjit Singh Jat recovers Dig from Rahim-dad's Ruhelas.*

Nawal Singh died on 10th August 1775, in the fort of Dig, while his brother was absent at Kumbher. The faithless Ruhela Rahim-dād, encamped under the walls of Dig, took advantage of the garrison being distracted by mourning for their late king, to seize the gate nearest to his camp and thus easily possessed himself of the whole city. Taking the infant Kesari Singh out of the royal harem he placed him on the throne, proclaimed himself regent, and appropriated all the stores and royal property in the capital. Nawal Singh's agents were driven out of their offices.

Ranjit Singh heard of the usurpation from his castle of Kumbher. He gathered his own retainers and the loyal Jat captains together, and hiring a body of 2,000 Maratha horse under Jaswant Rao Bāblé and some Nāgā monks, made a secret night march to Dig. He himself with his personal friends entered that fort by stealth

and hid himself. His Maratha and other troops from outside attacked the Ruhela camp under the fort walls early at dawn. Here the families and property of all the Ruhelas were lodged, and therefore Rahimdād naturally hastened there from the city to defend them. Then "Ranjit Singh showed himself to the public like the Sun rising above the horizon, and called all the Government officials in the city to his side. The Jat soldiers also came out of their hiding places, attacked the Afghans and drove them in groups, beating them with sticks like oxen or sheep." For, during their short ascendancy Rahim-dād's men had treated the local people with the usual Afghan insolence and rapacity, molesting even the women. Before the rising *en masse* of the people of Dig, the Ruhelas were ultimately overwhelmed, though they at first defended themselves with courage. At least four thousand men perished in the fight and the remnant of the Ruhela mercenaries escaped through the city gate nearest to them. But they left their general's son a prisoner and abandoned all their property to the Jats. Rahim-dād, too, had to sacrifice much of his camp baggage, and took the road to Delhi, where he was enlisted by Abdul Ahad Khan as a valuable instrument and sent to wrest the Crownlands in the Hansi-Hisar district which Mirzā Najaf's men held as fiefs, but which the Emperor wanted to resume. Here the faithless mercenary chief met with his deserts while be-

sieging Gohāna (18 miles north of Rohtak), being shot dead by the troops of Amar Singh of Pātiāla, who had been set against him by Najaf (*circa* 30th December, 1775.)

The rainy season concluded with Mirzā Najaf encamped near Farāh, midway between Agra and Mathura. Recalling his lieutenant Afrāsiyāb Khan from the Doab, at its end, he marched in full strength to Dig and laid siege to that fort (beginning of December).

§ 12. *Fort of Dig described.*

The fortified city of Dig,* which was the favourite residence of the Jat Rajahs at this time, stands eight miles west of Govardhan. Excluding its south-western off-shoot, the sharp salient called Shāhburj, it forms a rough pentagon 1½ miles across. It is surrounded by a rampart of beaten earth of a considerable width, rising to a height of nearly thirty feet. The entire northern and eastern and half the western faces are protected by a deep ditch. But the southern face does not need this artificial defence as it is naturally protected by a very wide morass, extending south-east for miles towards Govardhan. A few hundred feet west of it is a large and deep tank, running from the middle of the southern face

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* Thorn, *Memoir of the War in India*, 413-414. Pester, *War and Sport in India*, 369. A fine plan in Martin's *Wellesley Despatches*.

of the fort for miles towards the south-west and skirted on its left by a range of low hills at the northernmost point of which stands the separate fort of Gopālgarh.

This Shāhburj crowns a rocky height at the northern end of a ridge, and is joined to the south-west corner of Dig by prolongations of the southern and western walls of the fort, enclosing a long and narrow angle. The Shāhburj is almost a fortress in itself, with a small area of about 50 yards square on the inside, and presenting four lofty bastions facing the four cardinal points. About one-third of a mile south of the Shāhburj, at the other end of the same ridge stands Gopālgarh, another square mud-fort with round bastions at the four corners. Between these two works lie the extensive royal gardens with a profusion of shady trees, oranges, myrtles and mangoes. Inside the fort are the Rajah's palace —"a very noble structure containing a fine hall of audience and other State apartments in a similar style of elegance," and a large and beautiful tank full of protected fish, a romantic garden, besides the usual crypts for burying the royal treasure,—a square citadel (a quarter of a mile across) surrounded by high and thick ramparts, three bastions on each face and a deep ditch faced with masonry and massy gateways and towers of considerable height. There were also the mansions of nobles and rich men, and a

crowded bazar (Jawāhir-ganj) necessary for supplying the needs of such a vast population.

§ 13. *Najaf Khan's siege of Dig.*

From its situation Dig could be attacked only from the plain south-west of it, as the English found out in 1804. Najaf Khan, anticipating Lord Lake's siege of exactly 29 years later, cut his first trenches in the same month and week as the British conqueror (the middle of December), opposite Gopālgarh and the Shāhburj.

The Mughals were singularly inept in conducting sieges by sap and breaching, and "the bizarreness and ignorance displayed in the Delhi army's operations" justly moved the cultivated French captain to a sneer: when they asked for his opinion, Modave "frankly replied that if apes attacked each other they would undoubtedly construct such siege-works." Half the Mughal army faced the Shāhburj, and the other half (under the supreme General himself) the outwork Gopālgarh.

A regular blockade of such a vast circle by his small force being impossible, Najaf Khan at first tried a *coup de main*. A body of Hindu warrior monks in the Jat service occupied the garden between the Shāhburj and Gopālgarh, from which position they used to make sallies, raid the siege-trenches or cut off grain convoys. Hence scarcity of provisions raged in the Mughal

camp. One day Mirzā Najaf attacked them in person. After a long and obstinate fight, in which many imperialists (including Najaf's favourite slave Khusrau Beg) were slain, these Nāgās were defeated. They removed themselves to within the fort, their deserted post was occupied by the Mughals, and Gopālgarh was thus isolated from the parent fort. "This victory struck such terror among the Jats that the garrison gave up coming out of the fort into the open country for bathing and other necessary purposes."

About the middle of January 1776 a night attack was attempted. René Madec was sent at midnight with seven companies of sepoys and three French officers to surprise a bastion flanking the Kāmā gate on the western face of the fort, north of the Shāhburj. Spies had reported to the Mughal general that this gate was negligently guarded by the defenders. A part of the assailants scaled the tower unperceived. But Gallic impetuosity and Persian lethargy robbed them of the promised success. Madec, without waiting for the rest of his detachment to ascend, fired a volley which was the pre-arranged signal for supports being pushed up to him from Najaf's trenches. No ramp had been made in the escarpment of the bastion to enable the rest of the sepoys to mount in column formation and extend right and left on the ramparts, so as to secure a lodgement on the walls and hold them till the supports should arrive. "The defenders being thus

wakened, crowded from all sides upon the men who had gained the bastion, killing and wounding most of them, while the rest leaped down from the ramparts. By the time Najaf Khan arrived below, the Sun had risen ; the garrison, throwing open the Kāmā gate, rushed out in thousands and attacked the Mughals in their turn, while the fort guns created havoc among the imperialists crowded on the plain below. Men and horses began to fall fast, and the Mughals took to flight in groups in such panic that one pursuing Jat infantryman overcame ten fleeing Mughal cavaliers." [*Ibrat,* i. 281.] At this crisis, Sombre arrived "with lightning speed" at the head of one battalion and two guns and dispersing the exultant Jats by his accurate fire saved Najaf Khan who was standing alone, deserted by his own troops.

Two other attempts at escalade also failed because the plans became known to the garrison beforehand and they concentrated heavy forces at the threatened points. As the siege dragged its weary length along without success seeming any nearer, Najaf Khan's position grew more intolerable day by day. He owed nine months' salary to his troops ; the scarcity of provisions in his camp drove them to the verge of starvation ; and they frequently broke out in mutiny against him or his officers, or refused to go out on the service ordered in the hope of thereby forcing him to pay them. At the same time, as difficulties

thickened round him and he became more and more tied to Dig for the sake of his prestige, his enemies at the Delhi Court became more and more jubilant and active in weaving plots against him and raising a rival to his power by caressing Zābita Khan. But nothing could exceed the coolness and composure of mind of this Persian soldier-statesman; he pursued his operations without showing the least distraction or anxiety, as the French Count in his camp noted with admiration. On the other hand, there was no union, no leadership, no intelligent selfishness even, among the Jats. "There were many factions within the city, where the uncles of the Rajah disputed his authority, and on some occasions even made war on him...If the Jats had been united among themselves, I do not think that the Nawab would even have been in a condition to approach their capital, much less to lay siege to it." [Modave, 295.] The Jat Government as then conducted had not even the sense to employ a part of their vast wealth in retaining their tried mercenaries for defence.

§ 14. *Dig completely blockaded.*

In March the two Gosāin generals, Himmat Bahadur and Umrāogir, with their 6,000 brave mercenaries and 30 or 40 guns, after being driven out of Oudh service by the English, joined Najaf Khan, agreeing to subsist by plunder and not to expect any regular pay from him. The Mughal

generalissimo now changed his tactics; he turned the siege into a blockade. His bands of horsemen, both Mughalias under Najaf Quli or Miskin and Gosāins, patrolled the southern road from Kumbher and the northern road from Kāmā by which provisions used to enter Dig so freely that grain actually sold cheaper in the fort than in the besiegers' camp. The Mughal horse did their work so well that the coming of provisions to the garrison was soon totally stopped. The stores within the fort were exhausted in a few weeks, because an immense population from the districts around had taken refuge within its walls, besides the garrison of 60,000 Jats. A terrible famine now broke out in the beleaguered city, and no relief was in sight. The people perished daily by the hundred, poisoning the air with their corpses and those of the animals....The survivors ate everything without distinction." [*Ibrat*, i. 282, Modave 298.]

Unable to bear this agony any longer, the Jat soldiers began to slip out of the fort at night in groups, so that the garrison was reduced from 60,000 to 10,000. The poorer people were allowed by Ranjit Singh to go to the siege-camp in search of food. Mirzā Najaf nobly refused to drive them back into the fort for the purpose of intensifying the famine there and hastening its fall. He set up "a standard of safety" beneath which the refugees took shelter and were protected by his own followers. Encouraged by his generous

conduct, many rich men too left the city for his camp. Even bankers and members of the Jat royal family sought this means of escape.

§ 15. *Fall of Dig.*

In six weeks famine completed its work in that crowded den. Finally, in the night of 29th April 1776, Ranjit Singh himself fled away with the remnant of his troops and took the road to Kumbher, after some skirmishes with Himmat Bahadur's horsemen who barred his path. "As soon as the news of this flight reached the Mughal camp, the soldiers rushed into the fort with impetuosity for plundering. There occurred during the first shock much tumult and bloodshed; a number of women and children were killed. The plunderers set fire to the city. The gunpowder of which there was an enormous quantity, was stored in many different buildings. During three consecutive days, explosions leaped up at every moment from the magazines, which were fatal to the victors and the vanquished alike. The Musalmans took delight in showing their contempt for the religion of the idolators by filling their pagodas with the entrails,heads and bones of oxen and kine." Three widowed Jat Ranis committed suicide to avoid outrage. [Modave, 298-299, 231. G. Ali, iii. 91.]

When day broke, Mirzā Najaf entered the fort and appointed Zain-ul-abidin Khan to prevent plunder and outrage by his troops. But

it took three days to restore order, and Najaf Khan gained very little out of the spoils of his victory. In the citadel and the fortified mansion of Badan Singh the defenders held out for a day more, regardless of Sombre's guns turned upon them at point-blank range. At night, after massacring their women in the Rajput fashion, the survivors sallied forth and were killed to a man, though they slew a greater number of their enemies.*

Besides the abundance of arms, cannon, and munitions found in the fort, some buried treasure (said to amount to six lakhs) was secured by the Mirzā. But it was quite inadequate for discharging the long arrears of his soldiers' pay, and he was overwhelmed by their clamour. "His distress even after such a victory was so great that Najaf Quli and Afrāsiyāb proposed to him to give up the city of Agra to his army for plunder, on the condition that this concession would pay off everything which was due to them by the Nawab. But he rejected these vile counsels." [Modave, 299. *CPC*. v. 306, 370.]

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* "The whole of the Jat territory was now reduced to subjection, and it was only at the intercession of Rani Kishori, the widow of Suraj Mal, that the conqueror allowed Ranjit Singh to retain the fort of Bharatpur with an extent of territory yielding an income of nine lakhs." *N.W.P. Gaz*, viii. Muttra 163.

§ 16. *Najaf Khan's campaign in the middle Doab, 1776.*

His one problem now was how to support his overgrown army. So, after being freed from the Dig enterprise, he sent away his lieutenants to collect revenue in their respective jagirs. The rainy season which followed the fall of Dig was spent by Najaf in renewed military preparations near Agra. Shortly before its close, early in October, Afrāsiyāb Khan crossed the Jamuna at Mathurā and entering the south-western corner of the Aligarh district began to establish his authority over the refractory zamindars of that region, mostly Jats and Gujars whom Suraj Mal had first subjected to his rule. The chief of these was Phup Singh (a Tenwa Jat unconnected by blood with the house of Bharatpur) who had made himself master of Mursān and Sāsni and assumed the title of Rajah, (accession in 1749, death in 1798.) In December 1776 Najaf arrived before Mursān, after his letters from Agra had failed to bring this rebel to obedience. Afrāsiyāb and other generals were called up and with an overwhelming force he laid siege to Mursān. His big guns breached the walls in a few days. Though the garrison fought bravely, wounding Himmat Bahadur Gosāin, the place became untenable in 17 days, and one night (3rd January 1777) the Rajah fled away from it to Sāsni. Mirzā Najaf followed him thither ; Phup Singh now made a

full submission and was confirmed, through Himmat Bahadur's mediation, in such of his forts and lands as he still held. Mursān was joined to Afrāsiyāb's fief. The Mirzā next made a rapid march and captured Chharra-Bhamauri, 25 miles east of Aligarh. By this time January had ended, and Najaf Khan received an urgent call from his master to another field.*

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* Doab campaign, Oct. 1776—Jan. 1777.—*DC. Ibrat.* i. 290-291. Miskin 321. Muna Lal 176. Atkinson, *N.W.P. Gazetteer,* ii. 435-441 (Mursan.) 444 (Bhamauri.)

CHAPTER XXIX.

LAST STRUGGLES OF ZABITA KHAN, 1776-1778. SIKH OCCUPATION OF CIS-SATLAJ.

§ 1. *Court intrigues for setting up Zābita Khan against Mirzā Najaf.*

While Mirzā Najaf Khan was engaged in war with the Jats from May 1775 to January 1777, his rivals at the imperial Court were busy plotting his overthrow. But so despicable was the character of these intriguers, that their plans proved utterly futile, and the natural reaction of their failure was to leave the Emperor even more dependent upon the Mirzā than ever before. We have seen how Hisām-ud-daulah, envying the rise of a mere youth and new-comer like Najaf, had induced the Emperor (in January 1773) to reject Najaf's advice and appoint Zābita Khan Mir Bakhshi. By this single stroke of policy he hoped to placate Zābita's patron Tukoji Holkar and also to baulk Najaf of the second highest office in the Empire.

But Zābita Khan was now the mere shadow of a great name. The sack of Shakartāl and Pathargarh in 1772 had robbed him of all his wealth and prestige and broken up his father's famous veteran corps. The son of Najib-ud-daulah had acted as the henchman of the Marathas in Holkar's Rohilkhand raid of March

1773. Instead of being, as Najib had been in his lifetime, the acknowledged leader and protector of all the Afghans settled anywhere in North India, Zābita used to make frantic and futile appeals for aid to the trans-Ganges Ruhelas everytime that the least danger threatened him. The consciousness of his own military impotence also kept him back from siding with these Ruhelas in their fatal war with Shujā in 1774. And yet his weak and inconstant character led him to listen secretly to proposals for a pan-Afghan coalition against Shujā. The secret leaked out, and after Shujā had crushed the Ruhelas at Miran Katra (April 1774) he kicked away the timid double-dealer and coolly annexed all the trans-Ganges dominions of Najib's house, including Najibabad itself. Thereafter Zābita Khan's possessions were confined to the Saharanpur district and certain places in the Mirat district, which he held as jagirs from the Emperor and for which he had to promise regular tribute like any ordinary mansabdār. Though he still retained the title of Imperial Paymaster-General, the functions of that high office were performed by Mirzā Najaf, so that Zābita had absolutely no share in the actual administration of the Empire.

In May 1773, Hisām fell, and his place as the regent and keeper of the Emperor was taken by Abdul Ahad Khan, who at first pretended to be an ally of Najaf Khan, but soon followed Hisām's example by secretly trying to thwart and

weaken Najaf. While that general was absent on the Jat war, Ahad brought Zābita to Court, entertained him in his own house, and presented him to Shāh Alam, exerting his boundless influence in favour of the Ruhela. Ahad counselled Zābita to unite all the Afghans under himself and put down the upstart Persian adventurer and his Mughalia clientele, who had become supreme in the State. Zābita was thus to be the sword-arm of the cowardly Kashmiri intriguer in removing his rival. But Zābita had suffered many a blow of adversity in his short life. He knew his own weakness. The veteran Afghan armies, both of Ali Muhammad Ruhela's colony and of his late father, had by now been completely broken up and dispersed, and a wholesale transplantation of the respectable families from Rohilkhand to the south beyond the Jamuna had been carried out by Shujā, while the remnant of the male fighters of this race had entered Najaf Khan's service for a living. The dreaded Durrāni conqueror was dead ; and even the magic of Najib-ud-daulah's name could no longer call up an Afghan horde. Zābita's sole defence now was the hired sword of the Sikhs and he stooped to every humiliation to secure their aid. He, therefore, declined to become Abdul Ahad's cat's paw. This disappointment made the omnipotent favourite furious ; his former patronage of the Ruhela chief turned into a deadly hatred, and he schemed to ruin him.

§ 2. *Zābita defeats imperial army under Abul Qāsim and persists in contumacy.*

As Zābita had obstinately defaulted in paying the annual revenue of his jagirs (most of them former Crownlands), Abdul Ahad easily persuaded the Emperor to send a force against him. The leader chosen was Abul Qāsim Khan* (surnamed Azam-ud-daulah), the younger brother of Ahad. He was endowed with great administrative capacity, personal bravery, and political wisdom. In spite of his reluctance and repeated protests, he was appointed faujdar of Saharanpur district, and sent from Delhi in October 1775, "to regulate the crownlands and other mahals there" now in Zābita's possession. His force consisted of a body of Mughalia horse and two battalions of disciplined sepoys under Gangarām and Bhawāni Singh commandants. Qāsim left the Court prophesying "My brother is sending me to my death." Arrived in the upper Doab he gained unopposed possession of Mirat and some other forts as the Ruhela agents withdrew before him; but for four months he carefully avoided an armed conflict and kept negotiating with Zābita for a peaceful settlement by the payment of tribute. Qāsim knew that his Mughalia mercenaries were traitors at heart and not dependable in action.

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* *DC.* Ghulam Ali iii. 62-71, Muna Lal 169-171. *Ibrat.* i. 298-299. *CPC.* v. 87, 280. Bihari Lal (tr. by me in *I.H.Q.* 1935.)

But Abdul Ahad would not listen to reason; he goaded his brother on to a fight. So, on 4th March 1776, Qāsim began his offensive, though fully convinced of its futility. In the meantime, Zābita had hired a strong Sikh force. The fatal encounter took place at Amirnagar, eight miles north-west of Muzaffarnagar, on the 11th of the month. Zābita Khan had placed the Sikh horse in his van and his Ruhela clansmen in the second line, while he discreetly kept himself unseen far in the rear. The Sikhs began the combat in the Parthian fashion, making a show of attack on the imperialists and then falling back in pretended flight before the warm artillery and musket fire with which they were greeted by the Mughals. The two sepoy battalions of Qāsim advanced in thoughtless pursuit of the fleeing enemy and became far separated from the main division of their comrades. But the wily Sikh horse made a rapid wheel and fell upon the rear of the imperial army, dispersing the Mughalia troops who made a mere show of defence. Thus, a great confusion fell upon the Delhi army; Abul Qāsim was left alone in the field with only 50 followers round him; the Ruhelas encircled him completely; he scorned to flee and kept discharging arrows kneeling on the ground (for he was lame of both legs) till a musket shot killed him. His head was cut off and carried to Zābita.

Then the sepoy battalions found that the day had been lost and they were utterly unsupported

§3. *Ghausgarh fortifications and environs described.*

Thirteen miles north-east of the city of Shamli in the Muzaffarnagar district, and close to the boundary between that district and Saharanpur, stands the fort of Ghausgarh built by Najib-ud-daulah, in the midst of a predominantly Afghan population in the upper Doab. It is located within a triangle formed by the three cities of Thana Bhawan (in the west) Luhari(in the east) and Jalalabad (at the northern apex.) Each side of the triangle is about three miles in length. A little river named the Krishni drains the tract, running through the trangle roughly parallel to its western side and separating Ghausgarh and Luhari from Jalalabad and Thana Bhawan. There are some extensive marshes west of Jalalabad and south of Luhari, and the country is full of ups and downs so that any heavy shower' creates deep pools here and there, expands the swamps into the fields around and turns every lane into a streamlet and every stream into a torrent. Today this region presents a doleful picture of decay, depopulation, poverty and epidemics ; malaria and insanitary conditions of living have completed the work of desolation begun by the ruin of the house of Najib-ud-daulah in the 18th century. But in 1777 it was the home of a dense and prosperous Afghan population,— Jalalabad being an Orakzai Pathan colony,

Luhari an Afridi and Ghausgarh an Umarkhel Ruhela settlement; cultivation extended for a considerable distance outside the above four cities, and there were besides many villages thickly dotting the surrounding district. In 1777, after the loss of Najibabad, Ghausgarh was the last refuge of the proud Ruhelas whom Najib had raised to supreme glory in the realm, and here were concentrated the last remnant of that hero's army led by the elders of his tribe, especially his brother Sultān Khan; here were lodged the wives and children of all the leading men of the tribe. Here in 1777 the Ruhelas fought with their backs to the wall, and it is no wonder that their conduct in this war has extorted the admiration of every eulogist of the imperial Court whose memoir has come down to us.

The Afghan defence was materially aided by the condition of their enemies. The terrain was full of hollows and mounds and overspread with swamps, which admirably favoured the Afghan tactics of ambuscade and night attack. Therefore, the imperialists had to avoid any advance close to the forts and rash assaults on them, especially as the Emperor's person had to be safeguarded. But their weakness, in spite of their superior numbers and powerful artillery, lay in their divided command and the determination of Abdul Ahad to cross every plan of Najaf Khan so as to rob him of the credit of victory. Najaf Khan was no doubt the Mir Bakhshi or supreme head of the

army, but Abdul Ahad,—the grey beard, broken in health, broken in heart by the death of his dancing girl wife Waziran, and a Kashmiri by blood,—had got himself nominated as second Bakhshi! His absolute sway over Shah Alam's mind turned him into the defacto commander-in-chief, over the head of Mirzā Najaf. The open wrangles between these two chiefs and their mutual recriminations after every reverse stiffened the Ruhela resistance and damaged the imperial prestige, so that everywhere lawless men began to raise their heads and plunder the highways without fear. Hence, a decisive issue was unduly delayed, and the coming of the rainy season inflicted unspeakable hardship on the royal army in that low swampy region, especially as the rainfall that year was abnormally heavy. The end came very quickly only after Najaf Khan had called up his able lieutenant Afrāsiyāb with his powerful contingent from the middle Doab and conducted the war on his sole initiative.

§ 4. *Siege of Ghausgarh ; constant indecisive fighting.*

The Emperor at first halted at the village of Rāipur (4½ miles south of Ghausgarh), his left protected by the Krishni, his right by a large swamp, and his front by a branch of the same river. Najaf Khan led the vanguard with his own contingent. On 8th June he advanced in full force and attacked Luhari, the eastern corner

of the triangle, easily occupying the gardens south of that village. The Ruhela patrol fell back after a little skirmishing; the Mughals followed in reckless chase "driving the villagers away like droves of sheep" and thus fell into the ambush prepared by the Afghans with their customary skill in the broken ground outside the village. Two hundred of the imperialists were shot down; the rest broke and fled away. Najaf Khan, coming up with his artillery, arrested the counter pursuit, rescued the fugitives, and held his own trenches. On Zābita's side the brunt of the fighting fell upon the Sikhs, and on the imperial side upon 2,000 mounted Maratha spearmen under Wāgh Rāo, who formed the respective vanguards. The attack was repeated on the 11th. The Sikh horse made a detour and turned the right flank of the imperial trenches; but they were repulsed by the steady fire of Latāfat Ali's *najib* battalions and field artillery. The engagement was mutually broken off at sunset, after the Ruhelas had lost a thousand men.

Najaf Khan's spirit was now up. The small Afghan rustic militia had successfully repulsed the entire imperial army, four or five times their own number and led by the Commander-in-chief of the Empire, acting under the eyes of the Emperor himself. The enterprise promised to be even more disgraceful than Muhammad Shah's Bangarh campaign against Ali Muhammad Ruhela. In the race against the approaching

rainy season it was essential for the imperialists to win a decision before this month was over. So a third attack was launched, on 13th June. This time the defences on the Thana Bhawan side, or the western corner of the triangle, were probed, but with no better result; "about two hundred of the imperialists were slain; the Afghans fought well, but were finally driven back to their trenches, and the engagement broke off at 2 p.m."

Thereafter the imperialists used to ride up daily and waste their powder by firing at the Ruhela trenches, without being able to tempt the enemy to come out into the open. Nine days passed in this kind of inaction, and then on 23rd June, both sides engaged in a a regular battle, which raged with greater obstinacy and heavier slaughter than usual till some hours after sunset. But again the Ruhela trenches were not carried and Najaf Khan had to fall back without victory. This fourth repulse within sixteen days led to bitter public wrangling in the Emperor's presence: Mirzā Najaf taunted Abdul Ahad with enjoying the spectacle of the battle from a house-top safe in the rear, and wilfully causing the defeat by holding back the reinforcements which might have turned the drawn battle into a victory for the imperialists. The Kashmiri retorted by charging the Commander-in-chief with blindly leading his men into a useless butchery. The Emperor sided with his favourite, and Najaf

Khan in disgust retired to his tent to sulk in idleness for some time.

§ 5. *Rainy season; sufferings of the imperial camp.*

And now the rains set in with more than usual violence, turning the camping ground on the eastern bank of the Krishni into a vast quagmire and causing indescribable distress to the royal officers bred up in long years of ease and luxury. The enemy took advantage of the internal dissensions among the Mughals and their water-logged position, and one night in the midst of a shower the Sikh horsemen forded the river near Thana Bhawan and broke into the Mughal camp, penetrating close to the Emperor's own tents. It was only the guns of the Red Paltan (imperial guards) that repulsed them.

But the locality was untenable. So, Shah Alam moved (4th—13th July) on to the western bank of the Krishni, to the higher ground south-west of Jalalabad, that is, facing the western side of the triangle instead of the southern, with two marshes guarding his rear and right flank. Day after day the exultant Afghans used to make sorties and engage the Mughals without any result except that of harassing the invaders and denying them rest, though with heavy slaughter to their own side whenever they ventured within too close a range of the well-served Mughal artillery.

Najaf on his part made one night attack, sacking an Afghan village and returning without loss.

The war had now reached the point of stalemate, and peace parleys were opened from the imperial side. But though Zābita himself was ready to make terms, his uncles and their veteran followers, intoxicated by their recent successes, refused to yield an inch and sent the envoys back with defiance to a combat *à l'outrance*.

The invaders were now themselves beleaguered. Their sufferings from the monsoon were so great and their supply of provisions was so reduced by the Afghan roving bands and private highwaymen that many old officials and hereditary servants of State began to sneak away to Delhi. Imperial authority collapsed with the fall of the military prestige of the Government, and public disturbances broke out throughout the country. A large convoy of grain, loaded on pack-oxen, when coming from Delhi was hemmed round by the Sikh allies of Zābita Khan, but on the news reaching the Emperor in good time he detached his Maratha auxiliaries (under Wāgh Rāo) to rescue them, and at the same time sent a strong force under Najaf Quli and Latāfat Ali to raid the Sikh camp below Thana Bhawan which was now defenceless in consequence of the march of the men to intercept the convoy. The perfect timing of these two enterprises led to their complete success; Wāgh Rāo safely escorted the grain porters to camp, while the other detachment

looted and burnt the Sikh tents without opposition (*circa* 3rd August.) The Sikhs, after losing all their camp and property, abandoned the south-western corner and moved further north towards Jalalabad. Then Zābita sued for peace (12th August), but his uncles again overbore him.

Meantime Mirzā Najaf had been utilising the monsoon respite to seduce Zābita's allies and to call up heavy reinforcements to his own side. The Sikhs refused to break their faith to the Ruhela chief for money, but the Orakzai Pathan zamindars of Jalalabad,—Dilāwar Ali and Qalandar Ali,—who feared the annexation of their city by Zābita, yielded to Mughal gold and secretly promised to come over to Mirzā Najaf if he attacked the trenches near Jalalabad (the northern end), of which they were the guardians.

§ 6. *Final attack on Ruhela lines, 14 Sept. 1777. Fall of Ghausgarh.*

The rainy season was drawing to a close. At the end of August Afrāsiyāb Khan arrived from Aligarh and Dāud Beg Khan Kurji from Agra with their fresh troops and copious supply of munitions. Everything being now ready on his side, Mirzā Najaf sought the decision, with every confidence and in full strength, on 14th September. His vanguard (under Afrāsiyāb) was formed by the sepoy battalions, no less than 10,000 bayonets, marching in four columns and enclosing an empty space in their midst where the cavalry

was stationed. They carried their artillery with them. The Mughal line stretched for over two miles and moved slowly against the entire western face of the triangle. While the other divisions merely detained the enemy forces at the southern end (Thana Bhawan) and centre of this face, the real attack was delivered by Afrāsiyāb on the trenches at Jalalabad at the northern extremity. Zābita Khan, with all the effective garrison of Ghausgarh, came up crossing the river to the aid of this hard pressed sector of the defences and soon became entangled with the assailants. Then the treacherous chiefs of Jalalabad played their agreed part; they came over to the Mughals, guided them through the trenches and the town and even turned their artillery on Zābita's right flank and rear. The Ruhelas fought with desperate valour, regardless of heavy losses, and even made a counter-charge, scattering the foremost battalions of the imperialists and the cavalry of that division and seizing their guns. Afrāsiyāb's horse was killed, but he immediately jumped up, took another mount and galloped forward to cheer his men. Rai Na'mat Singh (the son of Mirzā Najaf's officer Bakhtāwar Singh Kāyath) charged from the line of guns but was shot down. Miskin (now a noble and a *Daulah*) was wounded and fell down senseless. But at last numbers and discipline triumphed, and the resistance of the small Ruhela band was quenched in blood. Zābita and his comrades, finding their

rear cut off and unable to return to Ghausgarh, were driven further away from that fort into the Sikh force holding the Thana Bhawan sector against which only a feint had been made. The Afghan line was pierced at several points; the battle was lost beyond hope, and Zābita galloped away with his Sikh protectors, abandoning his family and citadel.

On the field of battle Zābita's son Ghulām Qādir and Sultān Khan's son were made prisoners. Not a soul was now left to defend Ghausgarh. Mirzā Najaf immediately pressed forward across the river and blockaded that fort. It capitulated on the 23rd; the garrison was assured of life and freedom, but all the property within it was attached. Ten elephants, 73 camels, about 250 horses, and forty cart-loads of tents copper-pots &c. were escheated to the State, and the rest of the spoils left to Mirzā Najaf. Worst of all, the entire family of Zābita Khan and those of all the Ruhela leaders and military officers were captured in Ghausgarh. "The braggart Afzal Khan had hidden himself among the women in fear of death. The Qalmaq female slaves sent to search the Ruhela harem discovered him and dragged him before the public with insult". The captive women and children were sent to Agra fort for detention. The treasure hunt in the fallen city being concluded, the Emperor set out on his return on 11th October and entered Delhi on 20th November, 1777.

The branch of the Ruhela power created by Najib-ud-daulah was thus crushed as completely as Ali Muhammad's section had been by Shujā-ud-daulah's campaign of 1774.

§ 7. *Survey of Delhi Government's foreign relations 1772—1788.*

Within six years of Shah Alam's coming to Delhi his Government was relieved of the menace of the overgrown vassals who had usurped the lands round Delhi and so long successfully defied imperial authority. The Ruhela who had seized the upper Doab was crushed, partially in March 1772 and completely in September 1777; his fellow-clansmen of the trans-Ganges colonies had been extirpated in April 1774 and rendered incapable of joining any pan-Afghan revolt against the Delhi throne; the Jat Rajah had been shorn of all his enormous new acquisitions and turned into a petty zamindar worth only nine lakhs a year, (April 1776.) From 1775 to 1782 the dreaded Marathas were so heavily entangled in a contested succession at home and a war with the English abroad that they could not spare a single soldier for Hindustan. Even after the Peshwa's Government had made peace with the English in 1782, it did not find itself left with enough strength to repeat the large-scale northern enterprises of Raghunāth Dādā and Sadāshiv

Bhāu, or even the attempt of Ramchandra Ganesh and Visāji Krishna. After 1782 the Maratha revival that took place in the north was not the work of the Puna Government but the private undertaking of one of its semi-independent generals, Māhādji Sindhiā, and even the early efforts of this Māhādji were thwarted by the indigenous forces of the Delhi Government or its nobles till the end of 1788. It was only after De Boigne had shaped for Sindhia a weapon stronger than any in India outside the British army that Mahadji was able to make himself master of Delhi beyond challenge.

Thus, from 1777 to 1788 Shah Alam could have been reasonably expected to utilise this freedom from external danger in re-establishing his authority from the Satlaj to the Ganges and from the Himalayas to the Chambal, and even in asserting his suzerainty over his vassals in Oudh and Rajputana. But it was not to be. On one side was his weakness of character and lack of able and loyal instruments ; on the other there was a new factor which made itself increasingly felt in North Indian politics from 1763 onwards and came to dominate the entire country north and west of Delhi from the Indus to the Ganges throughout the "Great Anarchy" which was ended only by the British conquest of the early Nineteenth century.

§ 8. *The Sikhs : their military organisation and efficiency.*

These were the Sikhs. That sect was mostly recruited from the sturdy Jat peasantry with large additions in the form of converts from other castes. They carried to perfection the work which Suraj Mal Jat had begun on the same ethnic basis, but which had been undone by his worthless descendants. The Sikhs owed their success to their religion of full brotherhood and the democratic organisation of their society, while the Jats of Bharatpur were caste-ridden Hindus, living under an oligarchy of the heads of family groups. The strength of the Sikh army before it was Europeanised by Ranjit Singh lay in its predominance of cavalry and preference for offensive tactics, while the Jat soldiery were mostly infantry and excelled in the defence of fortified positions.*

The Panjab is a vast breeding ground of the best horses found in India, and the blood of their Scythian ancestors made the Sikh horsemen the best skirmishers and guerilla-fighters after the Turks. As a Swiss officer wrote after observing them in May 1776, "Five hundred of Najaf Khan's horse dare not encounter fifty Sikh horsemen".

* Sikhs.—*Asiatic Annual Register* for 1800, Mis. Tracts, p. 34. G. Forster, *Journey*, i. 285-291 (containing a quotation from Polier.) Cunningham's *History*, 2nd. ed. 104. Williams in *Calcutta Review* Vol. 60 (1875), pp. 28-29. Forrest's *Selections...Foreign Dept.* iii. 1123-1124 (W. Hastings's views.) Francklin *Shah Aulum*, ch. 5.

This astounding superiority, man for man, over all the other fighting forces of India was due to the Sikh character, training and organisation. As the same European observer remarks: —

"The Sikhs are in general strong and well-made; accustomed from their infancy to the most laborious life and hardest fare, they make marches and undergo fatigues that really appear astonishing. In their excursions they carry no tents or baggage, except perhaps a small tent for the principal officer: the rest shelter themselves under blankets, which serve them also in the cold weather to wrap themselves in, and which on a march cover their saddles.

"They have commonly two, some of them three, horses each, of the middle size, strong, active, and mild-tempered. The provinces of Lahor and Multan, noted for a breed of the best horses in Hindustan, afford them an ample supply . . . Though they make merry on the demise of any of their brethren, they mourn for the death of a horse.

"The food of the Sikhs is of the coarsest kind, and such as the poorest people in Hindustan use from necessity. Bread baked in ashes and soaked in a mash made of different sorts of pulse, is the best dish, and such as they never indulge in but when at full leisure; otherwise vetches and tares, hastily parched, are all they care for . . . Their dress is extremely scanty: a pair of long blue drawers, and a kind of chequered

plaid . . . with a mean turban, form their clothing and equipage.

"Their success and conquests have largely originated from an activity unparallelled by other Indian nations, from their endurance of excessive fatigue, and a keen resentment of injuries. The personal endowments of the Sikhs are derived from a temperance of diet, and a forbearance from many of those sensual pleasures which have enervated the Indian Muhammadans. A body of their cavalry has been known to make marches of 40 or 50 miles, and to continue the exertion for many successive days.

"Their military force may be said to consist essentially of cavalry ; . . . their infantry, held in low estimation, usually garrison the forts . . . A Sikh horseman is armed with a matchlock [of large bore] and sabre of excellent metal, [and also a spear], and his horse is strong and well formed.

"Their manner of attack: a party from forty to fifty, advance in a quick pace to the distance of a carabine shot from the enemy, and then, that the fire may be given with greater certainty, the horses are drawn up, and their pieces discharged ; when, speedily retiring about a hundred paces, they load and repeat the same mode of annoying the enemy. The horses have been so expertly trained to the performance of this operation, that on receiving a stroke of the hand, they stop from a full career."

§ 9. *Sikh polity and society.*

Major Polier designates the Sikh political system "an aristocratical republic. It is properly the snake with many heads. Every zamindar [*i.e.,* yeoman farmer] who, from the Attock to Hansi Hisar, and to the gates of Delhi, lets his beard grow, cries *wah guru,* eats pork, wears an iron bracelet, drinks *bhang,* abominates the smoking of tobacco, and can command from ten followers on horseback to upwards,—sets up immediately for a Sikh sardar ; and, as far as is in his power, aggrandises himself at the expense of his weaker neighbours, . . . Hindu or Musalman, and even among his own fraternity."

"A large vein of popular power branches through many parts of the Sikh Government. No honorary or titular distinction is conferred on any member of the State . . . The chiefs, who often command parties of not more than 50 men, being numerous, the motions of a Sikh army are tumultuous and irregular. An equality of rank is maintained in their civil society, which no class of men, however wealthy or powerful, is suffered to break down."

But it was the equality of the savage state of Nature. "From the spirit of independence so invariably infused amongst them, their mutual jealousy and a rapacious roving temper, the Sikhs this day are seldom seen cooperating in national

concert," but they are actuated by the influence of personal ambition only.

Such was the great weapon which Guru Govind's martial creed had forged and which long years of injustice and oppression under the dissolving Mughal Government had beaten hard and at last turned against their oppressors.

The chance of the Sikhs came during the eclipse of the Delhi monarchy which began in 1760 in consequence of the murder of Alamgir II by his wazir, the prolonged Durrāni invasion, and the knocking out of the Marathas from the North Indian political ring at Pānipat in January 1761 ; and they were most prompt in seizing it. While the Panjab proper remained for a generation afterwards a debateable ground between the Durrāni governors and the Sikh sardars, the Cis-Satlaj country came, soon after that battle, to be dotted with Sikh principalities, large and small, which swept away all other local proprietors and Governmental authorities from the Satlaj in the west to the Jamuna in the east, and from the foot of the Himalayas to the southern border of the modern Karnal district (the 29th degree of North latitude.) And even beyond this region the Sikh power overflowed fitfully into the upper Doab and the north Delhi portion of the Rohtak district, and through Hariana to Narnaul on the Shekhawati frontier.

We have seen (Ch. 24 §§ 4-5) how at the end of 1763 the great conqueror Ahmad Shah

Durrāni had practically to admit defeat at the hands of the Sikhs, and their national rising reached its crowning success in the capture of Sarhind (Dec. 1763) and Lahor (April 1764.) The fall of Sarhind, which was the capital of the Cis-Satlaj country in the geography of the Mughal empire, was followed by a rapid and complete transformation of the political map of this tract. Mughal administration disappeared and Sikh rule set in, though it took the Khālsa nebulæ some years to solidify into regular States and baronies in this region. As soon as Zain Khan, the last Muslim governor of Sarhind, had fallen in battle and his city had been sacked, the victorious Sikh confederates seized the country round. "Tradition still describes (as Cunningham wrote in 1849) how the Sikhs dispersed as soon as the battle was won ; and how, riding night and day, each horseman hurled his belt, his scabbard, his articles of dress, his accoutrements, till he was almost naked, into successive villages to mark them as his."

§ 10. *Sikhs overspread the Cis-Satlaj country ; names of their chiefs and their seats.*

Less than a decade after the fall of Sarhind we find a new political order* that has replaced the old in Cis-Satlaj Panjab:—Amar Singh Jat

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* *Ambala Dist. Gazetteer* (1883), 16-18, 40, also Ch. VI. *Karnal D. Gaz.* (1883), 33-46. My list differs in a few points from that given by Browne in his *India Tracts* (quoted in Dr. N. K. Sinha's *Rise*, 104.)

(a Phulkia Sikh) had been recognised by Abdali as ruler of Patiala and faujdar of Sarhind with the title of "Rajah over Rajahs" in 1767. Before his death fourteen years later, he had systematically extended and consolidated his territories, acquired Sirsa and Fathabad (*i.e.*, the western side of the Hisar district) and made himself the greatest Sikh potentate in this tract. A lesser Phulkia Sikh, Gajpat Singh, founded in 1764 the State of Jhind (capital 42 miles west of Panipat), and seized Karnal for a time. On his death in 1786 he was succeeded by his son Rajah Bhāg Singh, who continued to rule till 1819. Thirty-five miles north of Jhind and the same distance south of Patiala, lies Kaithal, where another Phulkia, Bhāi Desu Singh, founded a kingdom in 1767. On his death in 1780 his son Lāl Singh succeeded, dying in 1818.

Twenty-eight miles north-east of Kaithal and in the same latitude as Saharanpur lies the city of Thāneshwar, seized in 1764 by Mith Singh, a Manjha Jat of the Dallewala *misl.* On his death in 1777 his heritage was divided between his two nephews,—Bhangā Singh described as "the savage master of Thāneshwar" or "the greatest robber among the little chiefs" (d. 1815), and Bhāg Singh (distinct from his namesake the Jhind Rajah.) Both of them increased the family estates by force. Ladwa, 12 miles east of Thāneshwar, and Babain, 7 miles north-west of Ladwa, were respectively the seats of Gurdat

Singh and Sāhib Singh of the Dallewala *misl*. They also seized Shāmgarh Karnal and some villages of the Panipat district. Sāhib Singh, nicknamed Khonda and killed in a battle near Saharanpur in 1781, was one of the foremost warriors of that age.

The natural leader of the Krora Singhia *misl* during the last 35 years of the 18th century was Bāghel Singh, one of the most active and renowned chieftains of this race. His seat was Chalaundhi, three miles to the east of Ladwa. His comrade in many an adventure was Rāi Singh Bhangi, the master of Buriā and Jagādhri (21 and 23 miles north-east of Ladwa, and close to the west bank of the Jamuna), who was another most notable Sikh sardar of the Cis-Satlaj region. But the nominal head of the Krora Singhias had his seat at Chhachrauli, (26 miles north-east of Ladwa); here ruled Guru-Bakhsh Singh, the founder of the Kalsia State, and after him his son Jodhā Singh. A fourth Phulkia State was Nābhā (with its capital 15 miles west of Patiala) which Hamir Singh founded in 1755. Here Jaswant Singh succeeded his father Hamir about 1772.

The historian of Delhi during this period is not so intimately concerned with the Sikh principalities of the Ambala district, such as Ambala town, founded by Guru-Bakhsh Singh of the Shāhid *misl* (died without issue in 1783),—Malodh, 8 miles north of Maler Kotla, founded about 1750 by a nephew of Ala Singh, who was

succeeded by his sons Dalel and Bhāg Singh,—Radaur, seven miles north-east of Ladwa, held by Dalja Singh Krora Singhia,—Shāhābād, 13 miles north of Thāneshwar, founded by Karam Singh Nirmala, and far off places like Mani Majra, Ropar and Rahoon (the last two bordering on the Satlaj.)* But the State of Kapurthala, though lying on the western edge of the Jalandhar Doab beyond the Satlaj, deserves mention, as its founder, the ex-brewer Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, was one of the greatest Sikh leaders of his time.

§ 11. *Sikh disunion and weakness; effect of their rule.*

Besides these founders of ruling houses, the Sikh captains who took the title of sardar were beyond count, because any one of them might "command not more than 20 or 30 horsemen" and still be called a sardar. They combined only on the occasion of forays, and even their *misls* were not patriarchally ruled clans, but merely confederacies formed for joint enterprises of profit without any affinity of blood. The Sikh sardars, when not engaged in foreign wars and raids, spent all their energy and resources in ceaseless mutual hostility. As Captain Francklin noted in 1793, the Sikh forces, "from want of union among themselves, are not much to be

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* In the Ambala district in 1882 the Sikhs held 35 out of its 38 jagirs.

dreaded by their neighbours. Divided into distinct districts, each chief rules over the portion appropriated to him with uncontrolled sway ; and tenacious of his authority, and jealous of his brethren, it seldom happens that this nation makes an united effort . . . The discordant and clashing interests of the respective Sikh chiefs prevent almost the possibility of a general union." But Warren Hastings in 1784 had predicted the rise of a Ranjit Singh to unite the sect. [Forrest, iii. 1124.]

But in spite of these internal quarrels, Sikh rule was not without a beneficial effect. It did not escape the observation of Polier, who wrote, "In their intestine divisions, there is this difference from what is seen everywhere else, that the husbandman and labourer, in their own districts are perfectly safe and unmolested, let what will happen round about them." They also gave absolute protection and security to bankers and traders who preferred to seek asylum in their territories in that troubled age.

Outside their own possessions, the Sikhs used to go forth for exacting blackmail exactly in imitation of the Maratha *mulkgiri* or *chauth*-collecting expeditions. "As regularly as the crops were cut, the border Sikh chieftains crossed over [into the imperial territory in the Upper Doab] and levied blackmail from almost every village, in the most systematic manner. Their requisi-

tions were termed rākhi [i.e., price of protection.]* Each of them had a certain well-known beat or circle, well recognised and clearly defined . . . . The collections varied with the ability of the people to pay, averaging from two to five Rupees a head. Two or three horsemen generally sufficed to collect them, for 2,000 or 3,000 more were never very far off . . . Refusal was fatal."

§ 12. *Zabita Khan turns Sikh, raids the Doab (1778), is defeated by Afrasiyab and Najaf Quli. His complete submission.*

When in the last fight before Ghausgarh Zābita Khan was cut off from his fort by the advance of Afrāsiyāb Khan's column and driven into the Sikh camp, he found himself possessed of nothing except the clothes he stood in. All his property and treasures, all his wives and sons had been left behind in Ghausgarh, and these passed into the hands of the imperialists in the course of a week. The destitute Ruhela chief and his vanquished Sikh allies fled fast from the Doab and retired to the Sikh settlements in the Karnal district west of the Jamuna. Here Zābita Khan lived for many months after, on the bounty of his former allies. He had no money or follower and no landed possession now; but the Sikhs had enjoyed

* Forster reported in 1786 that the *rakhi* seldom exceeded 4 or 5 p.c. on the produce. (*Poona Res. Corr.* i. No. 95.) This tax was two annas per Rupee of the fixed revenue [*DY*. i. 108] in the north of Delhi region.

subsidies from his father year after year, as his munshi Mansukh Rāi reminded them, and they generously took up the cause of the penniless friendless exile. To cement their alliance, Zābita made a public profession of the Sikh religion, being baptised as Dharam Singh. To such a depth had fallen the heir of the champion who had held aloft the banner of Islam in Northern India for thirteen years! *

The winter of 1777-'78 passed away without Zābita Khan venturing on any attempt to recover his Doab possessions. After the capture of Ghausgarh, Najaf Quli Khan had been placed in charge of that Ruhela stronghold and the government of the Saharanpur district, while Afrāsiyāb Khan had been posted further south in the Doab as governor of Aligarh and the surrounding district. Here the two continued to strengthen their hold for some months after, by suppressing the rebel landlords.

But by February 1778 Mirzā Najaf Khan had become deeply entangled in a contest with the Rao Rajah of Alwar then in league with the Rajahs of Jaipur and Bharatpur. His position was rendered still more difficult by his jealous rival Abdul Ahad Khan, who swayed the policy of the pliant Emperor and secretly encouraged

* Bihari Lal in *I.H.Q.* (1935), p. 651. Miskin 336-338. *Ibrat.* i. 324-342 (full details of the Doab campaign.) *DC.* G. Ali iii. 130-131.

the Mirzā's enemies and promoted defection among his retainers. Thus was the Rajput resistance stiffened, and a large body of Mughalia horse (under Murād Beg Khan and others) tempted to leave the Mirzā's camp and go to Delhi, where they arrived on 25th March. The Mir Bakhshi's troubles were Zābita Khan's opportunity. In the company of his Sikh allies —who had been pining at missing their annual raid into the Doab this winter,—he crossed into the Doab. His name acted as a rallying cry for the local enemies of the imperial Government and his knowledge and influence helped the progress of the raiders.

They swept through the upper Doab with scarcely any opposition and their advanced detachments penetrated to Sikandrabad and even further south. At Khurja they were repulsed by Afrāsiyāb Khan with his abundant fire arms. They then invested Najaf Quli in Ghausgarh for some time. Afrāsiyāb could not come promptly to the rescue of his colleague, as he had to visit the Court and try to remove the hostility of Abdul Ahad by personal suasion (8-20 April.) But when he at last joined Najaf Quli, the invaders fled away and the two imperial generals crossed the Jamuna on their heels and defeated the Sikhs in a running fight up to Karnal and Budakhera. Then Gajpat Singh, Rajah of Karnal, who was harbouring Zābita, opened peace parleys. But while he and Dalel Singh (of Malodh) favoured

submission to the empire, Bāgh Singh (the Thāneshwar chieftain) remained defiant. So, the imperialists marched four miles north of Budakhera and captured the fortified village of Barāgāon* where the Sikh sardars had lodged most of their baggage. Then only did all these chiefs come to terms: they gave their word not to shelter the Emperor's enemies in their territories, nor to raid Mirzā Najaf's jagirs in future. Zābita Khan came over to the Mughal generals and with them crossed back into the Doab at Jhanjhana. Here a letter was received from the Mirzā ratifying the peace with Zābita Khan and promising him a high post with jagirs and the release of his family as soon as he would sue for the Emperor's pardon in person. The three Khans decided to set off for Agra and meet Mirzā Najaf there.

On their way down the Doab they spent a long time in reducing many refractory Jat and Gujar zamindars and laying heavy fines on them, —at Doghāt (15 miles north-west of Saharanpur), Parichhatgarh (the home of Gulāb Singh Gujar, 14 miles east of Mirat), Rohāna and Sāinpur (the strongholds of Makni Rām Jat, 8 miles north of Muzaffarnagar) and Kutesra (the seat of Sarāpā Gujar, 6 miles west of Rohāna.)

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* *Budakhera,* 4 m. north-east of Karnal city. *Barāgāon,* 4 m. north of Budakhera.

The campaign having been brought to a most successful issue, the three generals crossed the Jamuna at Mathura and hastened to Agra, where they met with a most cordial welcome from Mirzā Najaf. Zābita Khan was given back every article of his property seized at Ghausgarh and now stored in Agra fort; his wives and children as well as the families of his officers were freed from captivity, and he received a rescript for his seven mahals in Saharanpur along with the fort of Ghausgarh. In gratitude, the Ruhela chieftain offered the hand of his daughter to his generous patron. (20 Sept. 1778.)

This settlement finely illustrates the far-sighted statesmanship of Mirzā Najaf. He set up Zābita Khan as a buffer against the Sikhs in the upper Doab and also as his own *protege* and partisan for counteracting the intrigues of Abdul Ahad at Court, so that while he himself was fighting the Jats and the Rajputs west of the Jamuna, his trans-Jamuna possessions in the middle Doab would be safe and he would be free from any anxiety about that quarter. The peace was completed by Zābita Khan's visit to the Court, where the Emperor pardoned him and gave him a robe of honour and a letter patent for the district of Saharanpur, (30 January, 1779.)

CHAPTER XXX

FALL OF ABDUL AHAD KHAN; EVENTS OF 1778 AND 1779.

§ 1. *Najaf Khan's last Jat campaign.*

During the four months in the middle of 1777, when Mirzā Najaf was involved in the Ghausgarh campaign and exaggerated rumours were flying round that the imperial army had been reduced to its last gasp, all over the country rebels began to raise their heads once more. Chief among them was Ranjit Singh, the Jat Rajah of Bharatpur, who now tried to win back his father's vast domains snatched away from him by the Mirzā a year ago. In this work he found a great helper in Pratap Singh, the aspiring chief of Macheri, who had just entered on the threshold of his career of independence and begun to fish in the ever-troubled waters of Mewāt and Shekhāwati.

This Rao Pratap Singh, a Jaipur vassal of the Nāroka branch of the Kachhwa clan, had at first been banished by his overlord Mādho Singh of Jaipur, but had soon afterwards won his sovereign's pardon and restoration to his fiefs by his patriotic assistance in the battles with Jawahir Singh Jat in February 1768. During the next ten years (the reign of Prithi Singh, 1768-'78) he

remained loyal. But when on 15th April 1778 the throne of Jaipur passed on to Sawai Pratāp Singh, an imbecile and feeble lad, the new sovereign's weakness and folly and the consequent confusion in his State roused his Nāroka vassal's dreams of territorial aggression and independence. The Macheri chief had already begun to fight for his own hand in the Agra-Mathura districts and Mewāt, now as the ally of the Jat Rajah and now as a partisan of the imperial general, as he found profitable.

Hiring the aid of the Macheri chief and Ambāji Inglé (a Maratha captain posted in the Gwalior district), the Jat Rajah tried to recover Dig, then held by Najaf Khan's agent, but without success. His threat to Agra city also failed through the skilful defence measures of Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, Mirzā Najaf's local deputy. But the rebels made a successful night-raid on Farāh (15 miles north-west of Agra), slew the Mughal collector, looted the city, and turned the country up to the walls of Agra into a "lampless desolation" (July-August 1777.) No relief could be sent at that time to the hard pressed imperial agents in this region.

This revival of Jat disturbances in the newly conquered Agra-Mathura district recalled Mirzā Najaf to the scene as soon as he was freed from the siege of Ghausgarh. Leaving Delhi on 25th November, 1777, only five days after his return to the capital from the Ruhela campaign, he

pushed rapidly on towards Agra, putting the rebels down and setting up his own authority again. He stormed and demolished the mud fort of Sonkh (midway between Mathura and Kumbher), massacring three thousand of its Kuntel Jat defenders and selling their women and children into slavery. This one act of frightfulness had immediate effect, and his further advance was scarcely opposed. Kumbher, that famous stronghold of the Jats, was captured in a few days. Ranjit Singh and his step-mother Rāni Kishori fled to Bharatpur, which was next invested. In two months they were brought down to their knees. The Rāni personally waited on Mirzā Najaf and humbly appealed for mercy to her husband's house. The Mirzā had the statesmanship to convert a vanquished foe into a friend by restoring the Bharatpur region, with a revenue of seven lakhs of Rupees, to Ranjit Singh and leaving the fort of Kumbher to Kishori as a personal gift (*c.* February 1778.)*

§2. *Rao Rajah of Macheri (Alwar), his war and peace with Najaf Khan.*

Meantime, while the Jat Rajah was invested in Bharatpur, Najaf had turned to settle accounts with the Macheri chief. This noble had utilised the recent eclipse of the Jat power to make

* Mirza Najaf's third Jat campaign.—*DC. Ibrat.* i. 317, 345-347. G. Ali iii. 118-120. Miskin 335.

himself master of Alwar and Lachmangarh by corrupting their Jat custodians. Mirzā Najaf advanced to Lachmangarh, 20 miles south-east of Alwar, and laid a regular siege to it.* His lieutenant, Himmat Bahādur Gosain, lured away the Maratha mercenary Ambāji by a higher bid. The Macheri chief became helpless, and sent to beg for peace, but the Mirzā rejected his offer. In the midst of these operations, the Rajah of Jaipur, Prithi Singh, had died, on 15th April, and a new scene opened at the imperial Court where the favourite Abdul Ahad Khan tried to thwart Najaf's work by making terms with Macheri and Jaipur over the Mir Bakhshi's head. Tempting the Emperor with the hope of getting the tributes of these two Rajahs himself without having to give a share to the Mir Bakhshi, he announced that the sovereign would march to that region in person. The Jaipur and Macheri chiefs sent envoys to Delhi and tried to secure easier terms than Mirzā Najaf's. They were welcomed at Court and promised royal orders extending protection over their masters and repudiating the action of the Mirzā. The slothful Shah Alam was forced by his overbearing favourite into making a formal start for this expedition by entering into marching tents at Tālkatorā outside Delhi (24th May.) The mere

* On 20 May 1778, Mons. Visage writes that Najaf Khan was still besieging Lachmangarh. (Barbé, 247.)

report of this step stiffened the Rajahs' resistance to Najaf.

The commander-in-chief had to attend to this new danger first. He wrote to Abdul Ahad entreating him not to ruin their common master's cause by this interference at the moment of success; but the letter only misled the Kashmiri into thinking that Najaf was now helplessly at his mercy and could be easily squeezed out of his wealth and lands! Afrāsiyāb Khan who went to Delhi on a mission for smoothing the relations between these two chiefs, returned after twelve days of wasted efforts (21 April.) The Mirzā now took quick and decided action; he sent orders to his lieutenants Najaf Quli and Afrāsiyāb to march from their posts to Delhi and awe the Emperor into dismissing his marplot favourite. The news of this move at once cowed the cowardly Kashmiri intriguer; he dismissed the Jaipur and Macheri envoys with empty hands and made the puppet Emperor sneak back into his palace (29th May), saving his face by the pretext that he had delayed stepping out of the fort on the 24th so long that the auspicious hour had expired and an evil star had risen to the ascendant in the meantime, so that this journey must be cancelled for his safety!

The Macheri envoys, cursing the spineless double-dealing minister, went back to their master, who had no help but to seek peace at Mirzā Najaf's hands by agreeing to pay an indem-

nity of 33 lakhs in three years,—out of which three lakhs were paid down and security given for the balance of the first instalment (*c.* 6 July 1778.) The three lakhs with which the Macheri chief had bought off the imperial generalissimo, were a loan from the Jaipur treasury, and the Nāroka now tried to evade repayment of it.* Therefore, the Jaipur diwān Khushhāli Rām Bohrā called in the aid of Mirzā Najaf.

An imperial force under Zain-ul-abidin Khan (the son of a nephew of the Mir Bakhshi) was despatched and joined the Jaipur army. A confused and wavering battle followed on 8th August 1778, in which, after an initial success, the Macheri chief was deserted by his Maratha allies, and each side fell back on its camp. Next day the Nāroka, after again heavily subsidising the Maratha mercenaries, set off to raid Kot-Putli and other places in the Jaipur dominion with their help. But he thought it advisable to come to terms with the imperialists first and then turn his undivided forces to making annexations at the expense of the Jaipur kingdom.

So the Macheri chief with his Maratha allies came to Lohāgarh, won over Nawal Singh (of Nawalgarh) and other discontented Shekhāwat

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* *Ibrat.* i. 347, says that Khush-hāli Rām [*corr.* Daulat Ram] Haldia, a fugitive from the Jaipur Court, who had become prime-minister of the Macheri Rajah, spitefully advised his new master not to pay!

vassals of Jaipur, and advanced to Najaf Khan's camp for paying a visit of submission. But he was suspected of harbouring the design of making a treacherous attack on the imperial general, and so Mirzā Najaf stood carefully on his guard. Rao Pratap Singh visited Najaf Khan, on 29th November 1778, but haughtily refused to pay any tribute. The Mirzā, through Gosain Himmat Bahādur, seduced Ambāji and his Marathas with a bribe of four lakhs, and with their aid surprised the Macheri camp early at dawn, a few days later. Pratap Singh, who had just bathed and was engaged in worshipping his idols, had barely time to cut his way through the ring of his enemies with a few followers; but "all his property and camp equipage, worth 20 lakhs of Rupees, and artillery were looted." The Rajputs fought desperately with the Mughals who barred their path, but effected their retreat to Rājgarh.

The imperialists now poured into Macheri territory, ravaging the country, capturing the fortalices and occupying the villages. It was already December and the complete submission of the Macheri chief to the Mughal invaders seemed imminent when the news came that Abdul Ahad was taking the Emperor out to Rajputana in order to rob Mirzā Najaf of his command in that region. So the Mirzā at once patched up a truce with the Nāroka, by agreeing to an indemnity of two lakhs only, and set off to meet

this new threat to the very foundations of his power.*

§ 3. *Emperor's march to Jaipur; Rajah Sawai Pratap Singh offers homage and tribute, 1779.*

Shah Alam had no wish to give up his life of ease and pleasure in Delhi palace and face the hardships of a campaign or even those of marching and sleeping in tents. But he was completely in the power of his favourite. Abdul Ahad pointed out how Mirzā Najaf had been campaigning successfully against the Jat and Macheri Rajahs for a year but had not paid a single pice of revenue or the least share of the spoils of war into the public treasury. Moreover, the new Rajah of Jaipur was bound by custom to pay a heavy succession fee, which would be swallowed up by Mirzā Najaf unless the Emperor went to the scene in person. In the meantime, the troops raised by Ahad for the Emperor in Delhi were clamouring for their pay, which the empty royal treasury could not supply. If the Emperor marched into Rajputana the Rajahs and chiefs along his route were sure to present themselves and offer tribute in awe of majesty, without any resort to arms.

The Emperor yielded and issued from Delhi palace on 10th November 1778. Najafgarh was

* Rise of Rao Rajah Pratap S. of Macheri and his wars with Najaf Kh.—*DC. Ibrat.* i. 313-321, 347-353. G. Ali iii. 118, 120-125. Miskin 335 (brief.) *Vamsh Bhask,* v.

reached on 17th December and then Rewari (where its Rajah Mitrasen Ahir interviewed and was saddled with a tribute of Rs. 1,25,000). On the 23rd the camp arrived at Kanud, 28 miles west of Rewari, when the local Rajah Bhagwant Singh was received in audience and a tribute of four lakhs was laid on him. Next day the camp was pitched beyond Narnaul (15 miles south of Kanud), to which Badil Beg was posted as imperial faujdar. In Rajputana proper, several local chiefs were received at Court,—Nawal Singh Shekhawat the Rajah of Nawalgarh on 31st Dec., Basant Singh the Rajah of Patan on 5th January 1779, and Nathu Singh the Rajah of Manoharpur (35 miles south of Patan) on 16th January. The furthest point reached was the village of Aminpur, in parganah Amirnagar, near Jaipur, on 17th January. Here the Kachhwa diwan Khushhāli Rām Bohrā came (19th) to arrange for his master's presentation to the throne. But Mirzā Najaf himself arrived in the camp (23rd) with a strong and well-equipped army, and after some argument with his rival it was settled that these two ministers should jointly fix the Jaipur tribute.

On 19th February Sawāi Pratāp Singh was introduced to the Emperor by Najaf Khan. He presented a *peshkash* of two lakhs, and his tribute was settled by mutual agreement at 20 lakhs. The Emperor with his own finger put the *tikā* or paint-mark of Rajahship on his forehead, and then sent him back with many robes of honour

and gifts ; all his territory, including Narnaul, was restored to him. Najaf Khan undertook to collect his tribute, and leaving Himmat Bahadur as his agent for the purpose, he set out in the royal train (26 February) for the return to Delhi, which was entered on 21st April.

But the Macheri Rajah had again turned refractory, and on 26th March Najaf was given his *congee* from the imperial camp for punishing the rebel.*

§ 4. *Abdul Ahad with Prince Farkhunda Bakht invades Sarhind province.*

Abdul Ahad Khan, though holding the regency of the Empire, knew his own military weakness ; he had been long planning how to secure an instrument for overthrowing Mirzā Najaf Khan. Zābita had shrunk from such an enterprise ; the Jat Rajah and the Macheri Rao had been crushed by Najaf's superior force and statesmanship ; the Marathas were involved in a life and death struggle with the English and the domestic traitor Raghunath Dada. Only the Sikhs were left, and with them Abdul Ahad began to coquet.

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* Abdul Ahad's plots against Najaf ; Emperor's journey to Jaipur.—*Ibrat.* i. 316-319, 319-321, 353-357. G. Ali iii. 121-130. Muna Lal 207-215. Miskin 339. *DC.* (details.)

Of Najaf Khan's operations against Macheri from April 1779 we have no information in any Persian work. *CPC.* v. 1568 gives some news about him written from Delhi on 26th and 29th July.

On 23rd September 1778 he sent his lieutenant Bahrām Quli Khan to welcome Sāhib Singh and some other Sikh sardars who had encamped near the Shālimār gardens north-west of Delhi. Then he persuaded the Emperor to confer the title of Najib-ud-daulah II on Mallu Khan, a younger son of the great Najib and now a Sikh *protege,* as a counterpoise to Zābita Khan who had become an adherent of Mirzā Najaf, (28th Sept.) The day after this, Ahad himself visited the Sikh sardars in the garden of Yaqub Ali Khan and gave them robes of honour in the Emperor's name. The pampered allies of the impotent Government celebrated the Dasaharā day (1st Oct.) by riding out and demolishing a mosque at "the Guru's bangla" near Rikābganj and ravaging the cultivated fields. [*DC.*] *"Jihad* in the path of Allah" is contagious.

Then followed the Emperor's journey to Jaipur which kept the Court away from Delhi till the 21st of April 1779. A new political game was now played. Abdul Ahad, seeing the path of his ambition barred on the east, south and west, turned to the north of Delhi and planned to establish his own authority in the name of the Emperor in the Pānipat region. For this purpose he had got his son-in-law Sayyid Ali Khan appointed faujdar of the Sonepat-Pānipat district (5 Feb. 1778.) But this tract was dotted with Sikh strongholds and some places in it were also held

by Najaf Khan's collectors. Ahad's men could establish themselves there only by superior force.

So, immediately after the return of the Court from Jaipur, Ahad called up the Sikh sardars of the Karnal district to his side for maturing a pact with them. The Emperor refused to admit them to his audience, as it would be acting contrary to Najaf Khan's avowed policy. Just then Rajah Amar Singh of Patiala sent an envoy with rich presents to Ahad to beg for imperial support. He was in chronic antagonism with the other Cis-Satlaj chiefs, and particularly with Baghel Singh. But the Sikh sardars then present in Delhi deluded the minister with false promises of their support in case he marched to the region north of Delhi and in concert with Amar Singh tried to restore imperial rule in the Cis-Satlaj districts; they even held out a vision of reconquering Lahore and Multan for the Empire!

The old fool swallowed the bait, and urged the Emperor to set out on this campaign. Shah Alam declined; it was midsummer, he had recently had an attack of fever; and Najaf Khan could not be expected to join with the only efficient army under the royal banners. But Ahad overawed him by saying that if no expedition was undertaken the Sikh allies and the imperial troops would mob him for their outstanding subsidy and pay. The helpless sovereign ordered his son Mirzā Jahān Shah (Farkhunda Bakht) to march with the minister,—the eldest Jahāndār

Shah having wisely evaded the task on the plea of illness.

Abdul Ahad now got together a large horde of recruits and a train of artillery and set out from Delhi with the prince on 3rd June 1779, giving himself the airs of a generalissimo. As he moved north, along his route Mirzā Najaf's collectors were expelled and his own agents installed in their places ; those who resisted were attacked and their lands laid waste. When the expedition reached Karnāl, the local zamindar Gajpat Singh loyally waited on the prince and was forced to promise a tribute of two lakhs. Many other Sikh sardars also presented themselves and offered their adhesion in return for pay. "Gajpat Singh became Abdul Ahad's chief confidant and factotum for all Government business in that region. By his advice the Khan advanced and enlisted every Sikh who came in search of service and he gave to every Sikh sardar who interviewed him elephants, aigrettes &c. according to his rank. He planted Sikh *thanahs* wherever the ryots had fled away from the villages in fear of the royal troops." [Miskin, 340.]* He spent the rainy season near Karnal.

* Abdul Ahad's Patiala campaign.—Br. Mus. Or. 25,021, ff. 246 *b*—270*b* (daily occurrences 9 Sep.—7 Oct. 1779.) Miskin 340-342 (present.) *DC. Ibrat.* ii. 1-5. G. Ali iii. 132-136. Muna Lal 216-220. *CPC.* v. 1568, 1509 (Ahad had raised 30,000 troops by May.) *DY.* i. 24 (Zābita cowed into neutrality.)

§ 5. *Abdul Ahad's expedition fails; his disastrous retreat, October 1779.*

A fierce light beats upon Abdul Ahad's character from the records of this campaign. We happily possess minute daily reports of his sayings and doings and the incidents around him for the critical four weeks between 9th September and 7th October which marked the turning point of this expedition. They vividly illustrate his utter incapacity for war and management of men alike, his lack of the sense of reality in politics and his weak vacillating character. He shows himself an imbecile old man, swayed this way and that by his counsellors or by his own changing caprice,— in contrast with his rival's clearness of vision, firmness of will, and unfailing tact in dealing with others. Abdul Ahad had started with the two objects of taking possession of the Crownlands in the Sonepat district and exacting tribute from the numerous Sikh chieftains who had overspread the Panipat and Ambala districts. For accomplishing this task his instruments, in addition to the raw and nondescript levies recently raised by him, were some mercenary Sikh sardars whose brethren he was going to squeeze. His policy was further complicated by his relations with the Patiala Rajah. Alā Jat's progeny, in addition to the land-hunger common to all chiefs, were puffed up with boundless pride in consequence of the territorial confirmation and superlative title which Amar

Singh had bought from the Durrani conqueror. The hand of the Patiala Rajah was against every other Cis-Satlaj Sikh sardar of note, and their hands were against him. In particular, he treated Bhai Desu Singh of Kaithal as his vassal and tributary.

Thus, a hopeless conflict was introduced into Abdul Ahad's policy when he marched north at the invitation of Amar Singh and yet proposed to get his work done by the help of the other local Sikhs. Their adhesion to him depended solely on the cash nexus, and was sure to be lost as soon as he began to default in paying their monthly hire or demanded tribute from their leaders. Amar Singh had called in the Mughal premier only because he hoped to crush his rivals easily by using the awe of the Emperor's authority and the prestige of his son's presence. Therefore, as soon as Abdul Ahad made terms with the other Sikh sardars (like Desu Singh) and extended his protection to them, he thereby antagonised Amar Singh and was driven to declare war against his ally of Patiala as the only means left for recovering the vast expenditure he had incurred in coming there at the call of that ally.

Even then the imperial regent might have achieved a creditable degree of success and secured no inconsiderable payment of money, if he had possessed the practical wisdom to strike a bargain promptly and prefer a realisable moderate tribute to impossibly high demands. The royal minion

who had spent all his life at Court and whose sole weapon was his smooth deceitful tongue, found himself utterly at sea amidst the conflicting interests and tangled politics of the Sarhind province. And he made the situation worse confounded by mingling his private passions with his public duties and daily shifting his ground, instead of firmly following one clear-cut policy, as Najaf Khan used to do.

In the camp at Karnāl, Abdul Ahad was waited upon by Bhai Desu Singh, the chief of Kaithal. The regent, under the Machiavellian counsel of Gajpat Singh, on 12th September placed under arrest all the Sikh sardars then on a visit for paying their respects to him and the prince.* This stroke destroyed all men's trust in the imperial Government's good faith, and henceforth the Sikhs kept aloof from him in well-grounded suspicion. Ahad first asked for three lakhs of Rupees from Desu Singh, and when the latter agreed to two lakhs, the royal minister raised his demand to five lakhs! At last the Kaithal chief's diwan agreed to 6¼ lakhs on

* At night Gajpat Singh privately told Ahad, "It is difficult to extract money from Desu S. Therefore, as a political device, you arrest all the sardars including myself. Afterwards release us and keep Desu S. under confinement for realising the tribute." Majduddaulah, calling...[five sardars] inside his tent, arrested all of them. Then Tāj Md. Kh. reported that Gajpat and [three] others were agreeable to paying their tributes. Majd set them free, with the exception of Desu S. (*Akh.* 249 *b*).

condition of Desu Singh's estates being confirmed to him by imperial rescript and guarded from the Patiāla Rajah's encroachment.

Unaware of the real limits to his armed strength and swollen with a pride which would have been justified only by the complete subjugation of the Sarhind provnice, Abdul Ahad vowed to punish Desu Singh for his share in the defeat and death of his brother Abul Qāsim in the Doab in March 1776; one day he threatened to annex to the Crown all the estates of the Kaithal chief; another day he demanded from his captive the surrender of all the guns and camp property of Abul Qāsim which he had looted after the Khan's defeat and all the contributions levied from imperial territory by this Sikh raider during the past four years. [*Akh.* 250 *b.*]

All this time Amar Singh, the foremost supporter of the invaders, kept himself aloof from the imperial camp. His diwan, however, came (13 Sept.) with bankers' bills for five lakhs of Rupees in favour of Abdul Ahad, on condition of his marching back and not menacing Patiāla territory. He even offered to add a quarter lakh of Rupees as *nazarāna* for the honour of the prince's visit. But Ahad angrily replied, "I have come here at your call. I shall exact from you all the money spent by me, in every way that I can." [*Akh.* 249 *a.*] It had become a point of honour with Abdul Ahad to make Amar Singh come to a personal interview. He was so obsessed with

the idea that he would not accept the Patiāla tribute from the Rajah's diwan, even when the latter raised his bid to seven lakhs in the hope of inducing the imperial army to retreat. But after Ahad's treatment of Desu Singh, the Patiāla Rajah would not venture within the Mughal minister's reach. He fled away from his capital, leaving its defence to his wife and her brother Mahā Singh, while he sent to buy the aid of Jasā Singh, Tārā Singh Ghebā and other formidable Trans-Satlaj Sikh leaders. The loyal Gajpat stood security for Amar Singh's tribute and urged Ahad to retire, but the imperial favourite was deaf to reason and entreaty alike. [*Akh.* 254 *a.*] He obstinately pushed on towards Patiāla and sent his vanguard to attack that fort and ravage the Rajah's territory. He even tore up the bankers' bills offered to him by the Patiāla diwan and insisted that Amar Singh must present himself at least once. The inevitable result followed this folly.

Turning north-west from Karnāl, and crossing the Saraswati rivulet near Pehowā (23rd September), the main imperial army under the prince and the minister pushed on to Ghurām, 15 miles south-east of Patiāla, on the 28th. Their base remained here, while their vanguard consisting of Sikh auxiliaries and some Mughalia horsemen was sent ahead to raid the villages up to Patiāla and its environs. This they did for some time till they were driven back by Amar

Singh's allies newly arrived from beyond the Satlaj under Tārā Singh Ghebā and some other sardars, in a strong body of 15,000 horsemen. At the same time Abdul Ahad's Cis-Satlaj mercenaries demanded the full payment of their promised pay before they would move one step in support of his campaign. [*Akh.* 265 *b.*] The friendly Sikhs negotiated between Ahad and Amar Singh and a deputation of them was, after much entreaty, induced to go to Patiāla (5th October) in order to persuade Amar Singh to come. The Rajah agreed and even fixed a day for the interview and set out from his capital, but went back from the way. Nothing but open war was left now, and Ahad sent up a strong division from his camp for attacking Patiāla. On the 7th a great battle was fought between them, Amar Singh fell back and shut himself up in his fort; the victorious imperialists encamped five miles outside Patiāla and laid siege to it. [*Akh.* 267 *a*, 270.]

For two days there was an exchange of fire with the fort. It was ineffective, and Ahad was too faint-hearted or too wise to attempt an assault as the prince had rashly suggested. The tide now turned decisively against the imperialists. The condition of their camp was hopeless: "mutinies broke out in our army from the enmity between the Turks and the Afghans (the latter prompted by Zābita Khan), the refusal of Ghāzi Khan and other [Mughalia] captains to work as there was no money for paying their soldiers, and the tumult

created by Hurmat Khan, the chief favourite of Abdul Ahad. After Tārā Singh had arrived and joined the Patiāla Rajah, most of the Sikh sardars lately engaged by the prince suddenly deserted him, being lured away by Amar Singh's gold." [G. Ali, iii. 134.] To crown the Delhi minister's misery, another Sikh army, its number swollen by rumour to two lakhs of men, was reported to be coming in response to Amar Singh's appeal for help.

Abdul Ahad's position was now utterly untenable. On 14th October, early at dawn, he began his retreat from the environs of Patiāla. The enemy continued in pursuit of him up to Pānipat ; but Bhāg Singh and a few other loyal Sikh chiefs fought heroic rearguard actions against their own brethren.* Ahad kept his army together, sitting all day on his elephant and coolly surveying his troops in their running fight. The artillery proved the most effective defence of this compact and well-handled force against the myriads of Sikh horsemen hovering round. At Pānipat the pursuit ceased, and the harassed imperialists found their first camp and day of rest. They returned to Delhi on 5th November.

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* The prince's presence undoubtedly proved the salvation of the Mughal army. The glamour of the imperial name had not yet totally disappeared, and the Sikhs shrank from going to an extreme in their attack on the Padishah's son, contenting themselves with loot only. If Abdul Ahad had been alone, he would not have returned alive from this ill-judged and ill-conducted invasion.

§ 6. *Panic at Court, Mirza Najaf recalled for defence.*

This abortive enterprise precipitated a crisis in the government of Delhi. By undertaking it Abdul Ahad Khan dug his own grave. When, on 16th October, fast couriers brought to the Emperor the news that his son had begun his retreat from Patiāla two days earlier, hemmed round by lakhs of Sikh horsemen, the royal Court was filled with utter consternation and despair. The only army under the Emperor's own control seemed doomed to annihilation and his beloved son to an ignominious end in that far off field. And after that sure disaster the tumultuous flood of Sikh mounted musketeers would sweep resistlessly southwards and take Delhi, now left without a single defender. The one ray of hope was Mirzā Najaf, then campaigning in the south with a large and efficient army and very capable lieutenants. Frantic orders were despatched to him to come immediately to the rescue. The Mirzā hurriedly called in his outlying detachments and his officers from their fiefs, and gathering his force together set his face towards Delhi. At the news of the royal invitation to Najaf, Abdul Ahad abandoned everything in his camp and hurried back to Delhi with the prince in order to forestall his rival in the possession of his master's ears.

Early in November 1779, Abdul Ahad Khan returned to the capital, a bankrupt in finance,

a bankrupt in military strength, and a bankrupt in prestige. The Emperor was naturally angry at this result of an enterprise by sanctioning which he had alienated Najaf Khan. But the smooth-tongued Kashmiri quickly recovered his lost ground ; he made much of having saved his master's son and brought his army back, and he whispered into the weak Shah Alam's ears the old tale of Mirzā Najaf's ambition and irresistible power which would enable him to set up and depose Emperors like the Sayyid brothers if he was given control over the capital and the Emperor's person. So, at Ahad's dictation the Emperor now wrote to Najaf Khan countermanding the first order to come to Delhi. But that general, disregarding this letter (received only two days' march from the capital), pushed on and encamped, on 12th November, in the southern suburbs at the Kishandas Tank.

Nothing was now left for Abdul Ahad but to make friends with his irrepressible rival. On 14th November, taking Prince Akbar Shah with himself on his master's behalf, he advanced to Najaf's camp to welcome him and conduct him to the Presence.* Inside the fort and at its gates were posted Ahad's own troops under his son-in-law Qutbuddin Khan, with orders not to molest Najaf's men. The Mirzā, before his own coming,

* Fall of Abdul Ahad.—*DC. Ibrat.* ii. 7-16. G. Ali, iii. 136-139. Muna Lal 222-225. Miskin (present) 342-344.

had sent his strong-willed lieutenant Afrāsiyāb Khan with 1,000 horse and two battalions of sepoys ahead. These men came to the fort gate and little by little edged their way in by jostling the guards, who had orders not to fight and whose captain was confounded in the absence of his master. When the courtyard was filled with his own retainers, "Afrāsiyāb Khan drove Abdul Ahad's men out of the fort like a flock of sheep." The 'Red Battalion' or Imperial Guard of sepoys, at first demurred to vacating their quarters in the palace unless their arrears of salary were paid; but Afrāsiyāb Khan satisfied their captain with some money and more promises. The inner fort of Delhi now passed entirely into Mirzā Najaf's hands.

And then only did that general arrive from his camp, seated on the same elephant with the prince, but modestly in the back seat which is reserved for servants. At his audience he presented a *nazar* of 100 mohars and kissed the Emperor's toes, receiving in return a royal embrace, a turban and other robes of honour. His comrade Zābita Khan was also honoured.

§ 7. *Abdul Ahad's dismissal and captivity.*

The audience over, Mirzā Najaf Khan took his leave, and Abdul Ahad came out of the hall hand in hand with him in order to conduct him to the gate as a mark of honour and friendship. Najaf's lieutenant Afrāsiyāb Khan and his wakil

Manirām were waiting outside the Diwan-i-am; they had urged Najaf to place Ahad under arrest and thus effectually prevent him from committing any more mischief, but Najaf had declined to create a scene in the Emperor's presence; he hesitated long to imitate the Sayyid brothers and share their infamy. "When Abdul Ahad, clasping the hand of his rival, arrived outside the door of the Audience hall, he saw from the atmosphere and the look on his adherents' faces that he was now in the claws of his enemy; he became alarmed and cast glances this way and that in bewilderment. But his friend Latāfat Ali Khan had smelt out the plot and, taking a hurried leave of the Emperor, ran out of the Audience Chamber, thrust himself between the two ministers and snatched away Ahad's hand from that of Najaf into his own. Afrāsiyāb now urged the Mirzā not to let this opportunity slip; but Najaf would not even then consent, he left all his troops within the fort under Afrāsiyāb, while he himself went out and sat down in Raushan-ud-daulah's mosque."

Ahad passed all that afternoon and night at the gate of the Diwan-i-am, watched by Afrasiyab's men as sentries and by his own friends and the Emperor's servants as defenders. Negotiations with regard to his fate went on before the Emperor. Shah Alam was highly displeased at this restraint on his first servant and could not but take it as an insult to himself. Najaf's

emissaries, Maulvi Atāullah and Rajah Manirām, came and protested their master's loyalty and devotion to the throne. But Shah Alam strongly objected to surrendering Ahad and affirmed that minister's devotion to the throne. Next Mirzā Shafi Khan brought a second message from Najaf, reciting Abdul Ahad's long succession of hostile and treacherous acts; but the Emperor angrily turned his face away and ordered Shafi to warn his master not to touch a king's friend.

After Shafi had left, Latāfat Ali begged the Emperor to permit him to summon his own contingent into the fort through the river gate which was not yet occupied by Najaf's men, and clear the fort of the usurpers by opening musket fire on them. While the Emperor, as characteristic of him, was hesitating to make a decision, crowd after crowd of Ahad's partisans gathered on the river bank and filled the sandy plain below the fort as far as the eye could go. Shah Alam worked himself up to a high rage; he put his armour on and taking a bow in his hand issued from the harem on a portable litter, surrounded by the princes and eunuchs, vowing to expel Najaf's men. But by the time he reached the Diwan-i-am his courage had evaporated; his cowardly followers advised him to go back lest the opposite side should fail to show the respect due to royalty. He therefore returned to his bed room, the tumult died out, and mediators again began to pass to and fro. Najaf Khan continued

till sunset seated in that mosque and humbly asking for permission to take Ahad out of the fort, and the Emperor as persistently refusing.

By Najaf's order his troops sent their horses out of the fort back to their camp, while they themselves remained inside and passed the entire night on the alert. The city was filled with tumult throughout the night, "as on Doomsday. A terrible noise arose from every lane and house ; none knew what was happening in the fort which was occupied by Najaf's followers while Abdul Ahad's retainers stood outside its walls, their hearts set on bloodshed." [*Ibr.* ii. 9-12.]

In their anxiety for the favourite's safety, the Emperor and his harem did not sleep a wink that night. By his order the princes went to the ante-room of the Diwan-i-am and sat down in a circle round Ahad to prevent him from being dragged into captivity. But very soon Najaf's intrigue and gold began to tell. As Abdul Ahad's cause appeared manifestly hopeless, his followers began to desert to Najaf's side and were eagerly welcomed there. At last when even Latāfat Ali and Mir Sayyid Ali, so long his chief lieutenants, went over to his enemy's camp, the fallen favourite gave up the struggle and sent to Najaf Khan to offer his entire submission. The Mir Bakhshi took oaths to protect the life and property of Ahad, saying that his only object was to exclude the mischief-maker from the Emperor's presence. Then Ahad went back to his master, took leave

of him, and was escorted by Afrāsiyāb to Najaf's camp, where he was lodged in all comfort in a separate tent (15th November.)

§ 8. *Mirza Najaf becomes supreme regent.*

The field being thus cleared and the last trace of opposition being removed, Mirzā Najaf Khan, at the Emperor's invitation, presented himself again at Court (16th Nov.) His thanks-offering consisted of two lakhs of Rupees in cash and some trays of jewels, besides twenty suits of costly apparel and five horses on behalf of his sister. The last repinings of Shah Alam for his favourite's fate were smothered under this load of gold, and he appointed Najaf Khan as his Regent Plenipotentiary (*Wakil-i-mutlaq*.) The other high posts so long held by Ahad were now transferred—the Second Paymastership to Prince Jahandar Shah, the command of the artillery to Prince Farkhunda Bakht, and the Superintendence of the Select Audience *cum* the diwani of the Crownlands to Prince Akbar Shah, nominally. But Najaf Khan as the deputy of these three princes henceforth became all in all in the actual administration; all *parwanahs* were to bear his seal, and all *sanads* that of the Wazir, whose deputy and substitute at Court was Najaf.

Unity of command was at last restored to the Delhi Government; there could no longer be any conflict in the policy emanating from the same source, and above all, the executive head of the

State was at last a veteran soldier with a strong army and capable lieutenants under him.

The effect of the change was at once felt. Mirzā Najaf by command took up his residence at the capital, in ex-wazir Qamruddin Khan's mansion near the Ajmeri Gate and began to attend Court daily in the place of Abdul Ahad. He sent Mirzā Shafi against the Sikhs in the upper Doab and the Sonepat-Panipat region, Afrāsiyāb Khan to the middle Doab, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni to Agra and the Jat country, and Najaf Quli Khan to Mewāt and Shekhāwati. Internal peace at last returned to Delhi, and external peace was assured by the regency of a soldier whose strength of character and military genius revived the memories of Najib-ud-daulah. We can therefore understand the raptures of our invaluable memoirist-captain Tahmāsp Khan (Miskin), now settled with his family in Delhi in affluence and peace after his long wanderings and privations. He writes: "There was now general happiness among all and sundry at the capital. Marriage and rejoicing were seen in every house; buying and selling went on in all quarters of the city; new houses were built or purchased. And all this through the gracious and competent administration of Mirzā Najaf Khan. All the chiefs, Turāni Irāni and Hindustāni, were happy, prosperous and exalted." [p. 344.]

But this happiness was destined to last for barely two years and four months.

CHAPTER XXXI

REGENCY OF MIRZA NAJAF AND HIS FAILURE.

§ 1. *Najaf Khan's moral degeneration after becoming regent.*

Mirzā Najaf Khan held the regency of Delhi for a little over two years,—from 19th November 1779 till his death on 6th April 1782. He lived at the capital all this time and was never able to go out on tour or campaign. A march to Rajputana for tribute-collection in the company of the Emperor, or at least one of his sons, was twice proposed, in March and October 1780, but both times the project was given up owing to illness of the leader or lack of funds for fitting out the royal train. The first half of the next year was taken up in making arrangements for the gorgeous celebration of the marriage of the Emperor's favourite son Akbar Shah. And in August 1781 Najaf fell into a decline which grew worse in time and by the end of the year was found to be a hopeless case of consumption. For the first three months of 1782 he continued to linger, but more dead than alive. Therefore, his period of actual work as regent extended over twenty months only, namely from 11th December 1779 when he removed to the regent's

official residence, the mansion of Qamruddin, to the beginning of August 1781. In this period only two expeditions were undertaken, *viz.*, the joint attack on Jaipur by Murtaza Khan Barech and Mahbub Ali Khan (April 1780—Feb. 1781) and Mirzā Muhammad Shafi's long campaign against the Sikhs (Feb. 1780 to 1782.) Both of these will be described later.

About Najaf Khan's internal administration and the condition of the Court the capital and the districts still under the sway of the Crown, we possess daily bulletins for 8½ months, supplying information with a degree of detail and authenticity unequalled by any other period of Mughal history. They cover more than a thousand pages of the Persian manuscripts transcribed for Claud Martin at Lucknow and now preserved in the British Museum (Or. 25,020 and 25,021.) These months are so fully typical of his administration that the absence of newsletters for the other months hardly affects our judgment. They throw a lurid light on the character of Najaf Khan, the misery endured by the helpless Emperor and his household, the sufferings of the subject population and the disintegration of the army, and they prove the regent's utter incapacity as a civil administrator.

A poor solitary adventurer from Persia, who had not a single relative or patron among the Delhi nobility, a Shia soldier whose only kinsman in India, the Nawab of Oudh, long pursued him

with deadly malignity, had now become the supreme director of the empire of India at the early age of forty-two. He had achieved this feat by sheer merit, which shone in unmistakable light by contrast with the worthless peerage and effete royalty of the later Mughals. But if Mirzā Najaf's rise was astounding, the end of his career was no less meteoric.

As the first officer of the administration, Najaf had henceforth to reside at Delhi, and Delhi proved the grave of his body and of his reputation in two years. The hardy abstemious soldier who had never tasted forbidden drink or unhallowed love before, soon turned into a typical Nawab in his private life. The diplomat whose coolness calculating power and strenuous activity had won the admiration of the Europeans who had seen him, now became a sluggard with a fuddled brain, whose highest skill was displayed in putting decisions off from day to day and evading difficulties by making smooth promises. The serpent that caused his fall was Latāfat Ali Khan, an eunuch general formerly in Oudh service and a brother Shia. This man introduced to Najaf Khan's notice a woman of bewitching fascination but abandoned character whom Latāfat had wedded; and she, entering Najaf Khan's private wine parties as a hand-maid in attendance, soon made herself his mistress and the minister of his pleasure in respect of other women. The regent began to

spend his days and nights in attending singing and dancing by professional women. He frequently dined out with Latāfat or his friends and every dinner was followed till late at night by carousal and dancing in the harem. Of this we have mention with tiresome frequency in the daily reports of his doings that went to Lucknow.*

Excess in wine and women quickly sapped Najaf Khan's vitality. Delhi was an exceptionally unhealthy city in 1780, 1781 and 1782 and we read of repeated illness and child mortality in the royal family throughout this period. Najaf's friends complained that his constitution could not bear the change from his former active open-air life in camps and fields to the enforced inactivity of the close insanitary capital. He began to be troubled by long fits of sickness as early as October 1780, and though the doctors pulled him through, he would not listen to their advice to practise temperance, and after a year of such excess a slow secret fever seized him in August 1781 which ultimately developed into consumption and conducted him to a premature grave in 1782.

To any one who has followed Najaf Khan's campaigns against the Jats or Ruhelas, it would be incredible, but for the most authentic contemporary evidence in our possession, that this

* Br. Mus. Or. 25,020 and 25,021 (chief source.) *Ibrat*, ii. 25. *Zikr-i-Mir*, (printed), p. 138.

great general could now indulge in freaks of insane frivolity worthy of imbecile voluptuaries like Abdullah Qutb Shah of Golkonda or Wājid Ali Shah of Lucknow, as the following incident illustrates:—"On 4th and 5th June 1781, the Amir-ul-umara taking his entire harem with himself, in the company of Latāfat Ali Khan made an excursion to Wazirabad [*i.e.*, Wazirpur, north of Delhi fort.] At four *gharis* of the night he ordered the women of his zanāna to loot the melon-beds on the bank of the river near which his tents were pitched. Then he attended dancing till midnight ; also next morning till one quarter of the day. The baskets filled with these melons were ordered to be sent to his mansion in Delhi." [Or. 25,020, *f.* 312.]

§ 2. *Misrule and administrative breakdown, State bankruptcy and universal suffering.*

Latafat Ali, as the minister of the regent's pleasure, practically ruled the State. His servants did as they liked to the people of Delhi and no redress could be had from their oppression by appealing to Najaf Khan or to the helpless sovereign. His Mughalia troopers, who had a suburb (called Mughalpura) north-west of the walled city to themselves, defied the custom officers and police and beat them with impunity. Even the Emperor's retainers living in the city were robbed and insulted by Najaf's servants, and Shah Alam's indignant complaining produced no effect.

In fact, while the regent revelled in pleasure, the administration of the realm broke down. As Shah Alam complained, "Owing to Mirzā Najaf's neglect of the administration, the empire is falling to pieces; the soldiers, receiving no pay, are dispersing in bitterness of mind." And again, "There is maladministration in all the territories under Najaf Khan, and yet he is sunk in pleasure and repose in the company of Latāfat Ali Khan, and takes no step to remedy this sorry state of affairs. Latāfat has gained such a hold on his mind that he agrees to everything that this man tells him." [*Ibid., f.* 260 & 302.]

In the ceaseless pursuit of pleasure, Mirzā Najaf neglected the business of the State and left the administration in the hands of his Kashmiri diwans and Shia eunuchs, who acted as they pleased. The result of this rottenness in the head of the Government was the suffering of the people, even in the capital itself, and the failure of revenue collection. The oppressed peasantry in the masterless realm rose in despair and fought the local collectors; then an armed force had to be sent to crush them and sack their villages, which meant that this source of revenue was ruined for years to come. The highest statesmanship and unremitting attention to detail alone could have remedied this evil; but these virtues were nowhere to be found in the kingdom of Delhi then. The mischief was aggravated by a prolonged drought and failure of crops which

began to rage throughout upper India from 1780. While the price of grain and fodder kept the famine level, the State could get no money for paying its servants or feeding its troops and their mounts. Every one starved—the Emperor, his vast harem, the numerous *salātin* (or former Emperors' grandsons and great grandsons) in their fort-prison, even the menials and guards of the royal household,—and the blame for it was laid on Mirzā Najaf. And rightly, because he had gained the regency in the place of Abdul Ahad by swearing before Shah Alam and putting his seal on a *Qurān,* which the Emperor held as a pledge of his fidelity, that he would supply the Emperor's monthly subsistence money more punctually than his Kashmiri rival had done. And now when Najāf proved even more in default of payment than ever before, an intolerable situation was created.

In his financial distress, Mirza Najaf at one time thought of releasing Abdul Ahad from captivity and restoring his mansion and property to him in return for a ransom. He made Najaf Quli Khan his intermediary in these negotiations and a payment of four lakhs was mutually agreed upon. But the Kashmiri diwans set the Mirzā against the liberation of his rival as dangerous, and Najaf then changed his mind, thus putting Najaf Quli Khan in a false position. He showed a similar lack of firmness and sagacity in respect

of the Jaipur tribute, by constantly swaying to and fro between different and mutually jealous counsellors, so that in the end he actually received little, whereas by following a moderate but consistent line from the outset he could have given an early peace satisfactory to the Jaipur Rajah and promptly secured a reasonable but much larger sum. In the matter of the demand on Bhai Desu Singh's heir Lāl Singh, we see the same vacillation and folly on his part. Evidently he had ceased to be his own master.

When driven into a corner, he tried to escape by giving bills on his bankers, especially Lālji Mal, but these were returned dishonoured as he had long before exhausted his funds with them and even the advances that could be taken by hypothecating the next season's revenue. The unhappy regent sought to put off a declaration of his bankruptcy by every imaginable trick of evasion and false promise, till at last his countless creditors lost all faith in his words. His one remedy was persuasion (*fahmānidan*), and this he sent with his agents who were bidden to run after disgusted and mutinous captains and other creditors of the State and try to pacify them with words. But this magic pill by a too frequent use had lost all its efficacy. They would not take his words, they insisted on something more substantial. Almost every day there was an angry scene in his office made by his starving

captains and the agents sent by the starving Emperor to dun him. They openly taxed him with evasion and cried out, "We cannot any longer accept your promises to pay us tomorrow. Give us a plain refusal and dismiss us, if you like, but do not try to befool us like children."

The Emperor called him a hardened liar, a man of deceit, and in the bitterness of his soul cried out, "Abdul Ahad was a hundred thousand times better than you. I have no faith in you, nor ever had." The ladies of the imperial harem, equally exasperated by the withholding of their allowances, vowed to link their arms together and drown themselves in the Jamuna rather than constantly whine for their subsistence money and yet not get it for months together, while their credit with the shop keepers was exhausted. They even went into a hunger strike for some days. To the emissaries who came to offer Najaf Khan's excuses for his default of payment, "His Majesty said things which were not fit to be spoken." One day, driven to extremity by his distress, he told his slave Qambar, "If you eat any meal today, it will be drinking swine's blood. Go to Najaf Khan's house and sit down before him [in *dharna*.] Don't eat anything but prevent him too from eating, till the allowance of the harem is realised in full." Another day he told Maulavi Atāullah, "My condition has come to this that I have no second coat in my wardrobe." Then,

before his sons and nephews he wrote the verses:—

> "The master of the world is ruining the world
> Through Najaf Khan and Afrāsiyāb."*

Another day he cried out, "I am sick of this life,—no subsistence money, overwhelming debt to the bankers and traders of Delhi. I cannot bear the shame of it any longer. O God! quickly mingle me with the earth!"

Mirzā Najaf at last realised that in grasping at the supreme office in such a State he had only gathered a Dead Sea apple as the fruit of his life's endeavour. One day, when weakened by illness he came to Court, he laid his head down on the Emperor's feet, and wept in shame. Not only did he fail to show the least spark of statesmanship and administrative genius during these two years, but he had not even the business instinct of discovering able and honest instruments and trusting them with power and his confidence in their work. He lived and died a mere soldier, though a fine soldier for that age, no doubt.

This single redeeming feature of Najaf's character as regent comes out most clearly in the daily news-letters which tell us of his passion for getting new and better guns cast (especially by European experts like Mons. Levassoult), his frequent testing of the guns old and new, his

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* *Jahān-rā Jahān-dār dārad kharāb, Ze dast-i-Najaf Khān wa Afrāsiyāb.* [Or. 25,020 *f.* 92 *a.*]

personal inspection of artillery practice and the parade of sepoy battalions, and his eagerness to raise disciplined battalions in the place of the rabble of indigenous troopers. Even amidst strangling financial distress, he could not resist the temptation of engaging a renowned and experienced captain like Shaikh Kabir and setting him to raise battalions of sepoys drilled in the European fashion, though he had nothing but promises of jagir to offer in payment.

As the historian plods his painful way through these thousand and more pages of daily reports of Najaf Khan's regency, he feels that he is visiting the world of shades, by a dolorous path, through a murky air, with the hopeless shrieks and agonised groans of the living who are calling for death ever ringing in his ears. He wonders not why the Delhi empire fell but how it could continue even after this. He understands the nature of the burden which Mahadji Sindhia took upon his shoulders and which all but crushed him.

§ 3. *Financial difficulties of Mirza Najaf as regent. Capture of Kanud fort.*

The new regent's one engrossing need was that of money. In order to overawe the opposition of Abdul Ahad's party, he had enlisted an army of 30,000 men. The backbone of this force was a well-found artillery and battalions of trained sepoys who could not fend for themselves

by loot like the indigenous troopers and rabble infantry, but had to be paid regularly and in cash. And now in the hour of his final triumph he found his treasure-chest empty. The Emperor was starving; the recent ill-fated Patiala expedition of the Kashmiri favourite had emptied the public treasury of what little money there was in it. Najaf had secured the supreme post in the Government by swearing to the Emperor and sealing the oath with his own seal on a copy of the *Quran* which he handed to Shah Alam, that he would pay the subsistence money of the Emperor and his household move punctually than Abdul Ahad had done. Whence was he to get this money, nearly 1½ lakhs of Rupees a month, besides the pay of the imperial army now entirely in Najaf's charge—amounting to over three lakhs more? His late victories in many regions,—Jaipur and Macheri, the Jat-land and the Doab,—had gained for him promises of tribute instead of cash, and these promises could be fulfilled only by the pressure of arms.

Having to attend Court as the head of the entire administration, Mirzā Najaf could not himself go out on tribute-collecting expeditions, nor safely send out his best troops from Delhi for the purpose, as the Sikh danger hung over the north like a constant cloud and the Sikhs had once been Abdul Ahad's allies. Of his four lieutenants, Afrāsiyāb occupied the middle Doab (Aligarh), Md. Shafi the upper Doab (Mirat),

Najaf Quli Mewāt and Rewāri, and Md. Beg Hamadāni was engaged in dealing with Rao Pratap Singh Narokā and the Jat Rajah and subduing the Dholpur-Bari region westwards to the as-yet-unsettled Bharatpur-Alwar-Jaipur frontier. None of them could be withdrawn from his post without running risks. Mirzā Najaf was, therefore, compelled to seek out some other instrument for achieving any new enterprise.

And one such enterprise of the greatest magnitude and urgency was soon to engross his attention. The Jaipur Rajah was the largest and richest debtor of the imperial Government. We have seen how he had promised a succession fine of 20 lakhs of Rupees and thus obtained investiture (*tikā*) from the Emperor's own hands on 19th February 1779, and how Himmat Bahadur Gosain had been left at his capital to collect this tribute. But soon afterwards came the monsoon interruption, the Patiala expedition and finally Najaf Khan's march on Delhi with all his forces for seizing the supreme power. The field thus left vacant had been promptly seized by the Jats and the Rajputs. Another invasion of Jaipur had now beccome necessary. But the road to the Kachhwa capital had first to be opened anew. That task was taken in hand in the middle of the year 1780, and its success was rendered easier by Najaf Quli Khan's campaign in the Narnaul-Kanud district earlier in that year.

Najaf Quli, leaving Delhi at the end of November 1779, marched against Balwant Singh the Rajah of Kanud*, who had usurped many villages in the Hānsi-Hisār district during the late eclipse of government. These belonged to Najaf Quli's jagir. The Khan, on arriving on the spot, found it beyond his power to attack the fort of Kanud, because of the lack of water for many miles around it. So, he resorted to treachery. Pretending friendship, he released the Rajah's villages recently occupied by the invaders, sent him gifts, and invited him to a friendly meeting. The Rajah's son came in response to the invitation and the Mughal general assassinated him with the thirty Rajput nobles in attendance on him. (*C.* 4 Dec. 1779. *DC.*) Najaf Quli now promptly advanced to Kanud and laid siege to the fort, after arranging for the transport of water by camels. Trained sepoys under European officers and artillery, from Begam Samru's force, joined the besiegers. Considering that most of the nobles of the State had been massacred with their prince, the fall of the place was inevitable. The Rajputs, however, made a long and desperate defence. Narnaul, from which help was expected, was looted by a detachment from the Mughal army on 5th February, and by the end of that month

* Najaf Quli's campaign.—*Ibrat.* ii. 23-24. *DC.* Br. Mus. Or. 25,020, *ff.* 7*a*-44*b*. Date of fall of Kanud, *CPC.* v. 1843.

the besiegers had carried the sap to the edge of the moat of Kanud. On 14th February, four hundred men of the garrison made a sortie and attacked the trenches of Mitrasen Ahir the Rajah of Rewari, inflicting a hundred casualties. A week earlier, seventeen desperadoes had issued from the fort separately, vowing to slay Najaf Quli and perish in the attempt; but the first to rush upon him was arrested. Nawal Singh Shekhawat, who was severely ill within the fort, was sent out in a *pālki* to Singhāna by mutual consent, and there died (*c*. 24 Feb.) The Rāni who was holding the fort in the absence of her husband, at last capitulated on 17th March and was given a few villages for her support.

§ 4. *Invasion of Shekhawati by Murtaza Khan Barech and of Jaipur by Mahbub Ali Khan, 1780.*

Immediately after the fall of Kanud, Mirzā Najaf gained a great accession of strength for his Jaipur enterprise. We have already met with Mahbub Ali Khan, the Oudh general, who had acted with the English brigade in repelling the Marathas at Rāmghāt in 1773. During the imbecile rule of Asafuddaulah he left Lucknow in disgust and came to Agra (4th March 1780) with his family and a train of six hundred soldiers, intending to go to Mecca. Such a renowned warrior was not to be thrown away. Immediately on hearing of his arrival, Najaf Khan sent him high offers for luring him into his service, with

his seal stamped on a *Qurān* as witness to his fidelity. Mahbub agreed; he was told to raise an army on his own account and pay it afterwards out of the tribute collected and spoils taken in the campaign. His name drew large crowds of military adventurers and his quota was soon completed.

Meantime, Himmat Bahadur had not been able to realise the promised tribute at Jaipur even after a year's stay. The Jaipur Government, with a half-witted boy of fifteen on the throne, unchecked by any strong and wise minister, was pursuing a senseless capricious course.* The old diwān Khush-hāli Rām Bohrā by his shrewd diplomacy had turned aside the attack of the Rao Rajah and later that of the Mir Bakhshi. After the settlement made with the Emperor in February 1779, this minister, who had often to be absent from Jaipur on diplomatic missions, appointed Daulat Rām Haldiā (the fugitive ex-minister of Macheri) as his deputy at his master's

* Mughal invasion of Jaipur, 1780-81.—Br. Mus. Or. 25,020, *ff*. 35-50, 54-345. Or. 25,021, *ff*. 1-25, 271-284. (best) Raj. xii. 8. *DY*. i. 20, 31. Gw. i. 94. *Mahes. Darbar*, i. 7, 9, 10, 12, 19, 51 (important.) *Ibrat*. ii. 17-23. *DC*. (only the date of Murtaza's victory.)

CPC. v. 1843.—It was at first proposed that Najaf should himself lead this campaign, taking the Emperor with himself. Then Prince Akbar Shah was to take his father's place in this army, and the marching tents of the prince and the regent were pitched at Tāl Katora *en route* for Jaipur on 22 March 1780. The scheme was then abandoned, probably owing to Akbar's illness.

Court. The ungrateful Haldia quickly made his way into the imbecile young Rajah's heart and gained the regency for himself by ousting his patron, whom he accused of embezzlement. The Bohrā, on his return to Court, was called to a harsh audit and confined in Amber fort to answer a demand for lakhs of Rupees. But Daulat Rām's glory was short-lived ; early in 1780 he had to flee for his life and seek asylum with Najaf Khan in Delhi,—a tailor named Rodā-rām taking his place as the Kachhwa Rajah's guiding angel. Just then Mirzā Najaf received Himmat Bahadur's report that the Jaipur Government was hopelessly in default of payment.

A double invasion of the Jaipur kingdom in over-whelming force was now organised. Murtaza Khan Barech with his Afghan and Baluch followers was to force the northern route through the Shekhāwati country and descend on Jaipur from its north, while at the same time Mahbub Ali Khan was to follow the southern road to Jaipur, marching westwards from Agra *viâ* Hindaun and Lalsont, and strike at the Kachhwa capital from its south side. Mahbub left Delhi early in May, the traitor Daulat Rām Haldiā guiding him with his local knowledge. A strong imperial division of five battalions of trained sepoys (some under European commandants) and a thousand horse with artillery, besides his own new levies, accompanied the general. When he met Himmat Bahadur at Bayānā, a

quarrel about precedence broke out between the two. The soldiers, one and all, voted for Mahbub, and he resumed the march on Jaipur leaving his angry coadjutor behind. His advance was rapid and successful ; in the then disrupted condition of the Jaipur State no place resisted him or could resist him long. By making rapid marches he advanced looting the cities in the eastern and southern regions of the Jaipur State and taking many fortalices. Jhalai, Bhandarej, Basi-Toda, Lālbāri, Chatsu and Watka were among his victims, till on 20th October he arrived at the gate of the Kachhwa capital, in which the Rajah had shut himself up. At exactly the same time, his colleague Murtaza Khan had worked his way through the Shekhāwati country to Sri Madhopur, forty miles north of Jaipur.

Meantime Rajah Sawai Pratap Singh in utter helplessness had set Khushhāli Rām free and appointed him regent with supreme authority (18th October) and sent him to make peace with the Mughal Government at any cost. Mahbub Ali had quarrelled with Daulat Rām Haldiā, in spite of Najaf Khan's reprimand. On 2nd November Khushhali Ram interviewed Mahbub Ali in his tents outside Jaipur, but his offer of tribute was rejected as inadequate and delusive. The Jaipur regent even proposed to hire 6,500 of Mahbub's troops for a daily subsidy and employ them in recovering certain mahals from the Macheri chief. The Delhi general dis-

believed his sincerity as he had received information of Khush-hali being in secret league with the Rao Rajah and of his having invited that chief to join in the defence of Jaipur. Mahbub Ali had been living all this time on plunder, constantly moving to new pastures. He next marched east from Tonk (50 miles south of Jaipur) towards Malarna (18 miles north of Ranthambhor fort) where he captured the *garhi* (probably Kirni) of Thakur Shambhu Singh (7th Nov.) and then laid siege to Malarna. His troops captured Barwada (20 m. west of Ranthambhor) on the 9th. The woful situation of the splendid heritage of Man Singh and Mirzā Rajah Jai Singh at this time is thus described in a Marathi despatch of 10th October 1780: "The Turks have seized 32 parganahs of Jaipur and set up their outpost 12 *kos* from Jaipur city. Fourteen parganahs of the jagirdars (feudal vassals) and two of the *ghanims*, [together with the 32 above] make a total of 48 parganahs lost by the Jaipur Rajah. Only four parganahs remain under him." [*Mah. Dar.* i. 19.]

But the attempt to exact the Jaipur tribute by coercion through Mahbub Ali failed. The Rajah held out within his impregnable fortress, and the invader soon exhausted the resources of the open country, and as he could not pay his troops they began to leave him rather than die of famine in that desert land. To add to Mahbub Ali's disgrace, the negotiations for the

Jaipur tribute were taken out of his hands and entrusted to Himmat Bahadur once again. Najaf Khan had been disappointed with Mahbub for his failure to secure any payment in spite of his success in the field. Jaipur agents met Himmat Bahadur, then sulking in his jagir at Vrindavan, bribed him heavily to save their Rajah and sent him off to Delhi where the Gosain gave a fee of Rs. 25,000 to Shivarām Kashmiri, the guiding angel of Najaf Khan, and through him secured an order on Mahbub to make peace with the Rajah of Jaipur, in return for a promise of 21 lakhs of Rupees. The Jaipur envoys offered two lakhs down and the balance by monthly instalments of Rs. 75,000 in future, on condition that the armies under Mahbub Ali and Murtaza Khan should be recalled and all the Jaipur territory seized by them should be relinquished. Najaf agreed except for Narnaul and Hindaun which he wanted to annex.

Mahbub Ali had been planning to force a decision by storming the fortified city of Jaipur so as to bring the defiant Rajah down on his knees, and for this purpose he asked for more troops and guns from Delhi. Mirzā Najaf knew the impossibility of the attempt and wisely forbade it. At last in February 1781, Mahbub Ali, finding it beyond his power to maintain himself longer there and being daily threatened by the mutiny of his unpaid soldiery, marched back to Dig, and leaving most of his troops in camp there,

himself went to Delhi to demand payment from Najaf Khan. The regent, as usual, was ready with promises ; but Mahbub Ali bluntly told him, "My unpaid soldiers are dispersing from their camp. If such be your wish, say so plainly, in order that these men may not perish uselessly" (3rd May.) Ten thousand Rupees were paid him next day, but it was a mere drop in the ocean of his debt to his army, for whom he had already advanced five or six lakhs from his own pocket and who had now already served for fourteen months. He again and again threatened to go away to Mecca, as he could see no possible work that he might do for Najaf in such circumstances. His soldiers used to throng at the gate of his Delhi residence and make rows for their dues. The regent by repeated entreaties promises and evasions gained time ; but the evil day could not be put off beyond 22nd June, when Mahbub finally took his *congee* for his pilgrimage to the Holy Cities of Arabia. Even then Najaf Khan told him, "Wait at Agra with my sister. I too am coming." His troops were offered employment in Murtaza Khan's contingent, but as they were no better paid than before they dispersed. Thus a fine army was broken up and a great general ruined for ever. "His levies mutinying for their arrears of pay, looted all his property, and at last Mahbub set out for Mecca as a faqir." [*Ibrat.* ii. 23.]

We shall now turn to Murtaza Khan Barech's part in this invasion of Jaipur. Early in March 1780, his nephew in coming from Narnaul was slain by the Rajputs on the way and his property looted. Mirzā Najaf ordered him to raise a force of his own on the same terms and promises as Mahbub Ali's, and sent him to penetrate into Jaipur from the north, simultaneously with the latter general's march by the south-west. Murtaza's route brought him into conflict with the Shekhawats, the bravest among the clans of Jaipur. They barred his path at a place beyond Narnaul, but after a six hours' fight with heavy slaughter on both sides, he defeated them (*c.* 20th July.) Advancing further west and south, he roved about in the region round Udepur (20 miles north of Sri Madhopur), in the very heart of the Shekhawat country, and tried to secure tribute from Sikar, Nawalgarh, Khetri, Singhāna and other baronies by negotiation or threat of arms. On 20th October when Mahbub Ali reached the gate of Jaipur city from the south, Murtaza Khan had made his way to Sri Madhopur, 8 miles north of Ringas railway junction and only forty miles north of Jaipur. But these forty miles he was not destined to cross, and finally he too returned to Delhi covered with debt and failure, early in March 1781. Mirzā Najaf's finely conceived strategy, though punctually carried out by these two able subordinates, in the end broke down on the rock of finance. The

delaying tactics of the Jaipur ministers succeeded, as the craven Rajah shut himself up in his capital leaving all his realm outside open to Mughal spoliation. The capture of Jaipur fort alone would have put the seal and crown on the imperial victory, but that feat was impossible as Malhar Rao Holkar had found out in January 1751.

Murtaza Khan owed Rs. 1,80,000 to his soldiers, besides having spent a large sum of his own on this expedition. Najaf Khan could now offer him only Rs. 20,000 in cash payable ten days later and the balance at the rate of Rs. 30,000 a month from the Jaipur tribute when (and if) realised. The general was sent off in April to the upper Doab to operate against the Sikhs, and two months later to the Panipat district, but here too he was no better supplied with money, and his soldiers starved as in Jaipur. "They took by force whatever they could from him, and then disbanded." [*Ibr.* ii. 23.] The history of the Jaipur tribute will be told fully in a later chapter.

§ 5. *Muhammad Shafi's campaigns against the Sikhs, 1780-1781.*

The utter discomfiture of the imperialists in the Patiala campaign of October 1779 was followed by an onrush of the exultant Sikhs into the upper Doab, where there was none to resist them. The imperial Government was paralysed for a time by the Court revolution which raised

Mirzā Najaf to the regency and naturally led to a concentration of his forces in the capital (November.) But by the end of the year things had settled down, and in January next his grand-nephew Mirzā Muhammad Shafi was sent to the Doab with a choice force of 10,000 men and a powerful artillery to guard that province and protect the crops. This general's first task was to subdue the local landlords who had used the Sikh incursion to throw off the authority of Government from within the shelter of their mudforts. Shafi advanced from his base at Mirat, *vià* Barnawa, and sacked the rebel village of Sup (12 miles north-west of Barnawa) after a stiff fight, on 10th February 1780. He then held his ground, guarding the Mirat district.

At the end of the rainy season, Zābita Khan was given his *congee* from Delhi (12th October) with pressing orders to assist Shafi in the war with the Sikhs. The two generals united their forces on the 28th of the month, at Tānda, on the eastern bank of the Jamuna, 14 miles south-east of Panipat. The Cis-Satlaj Sikh sardars were constantly engaged in their mutual contests for land and supremacy,—Amar Singh of Patiala fighting Bhai Desu Singh of Kaithal, whose cause Sāhib Singh Khonda supported,—or Sāhib Singh with Duljā Singh and Bhāg Singh attacking Bhangā Singh of Thaneshwar and trying to wrest that fort from him (Nov. 1780.) Both sides had appealed to the imperial general for aid, and

Najaf Khan had left it to Shafi to ally himself with one of the parties and fight the other as he deemed it more profitable to the Delhi Government. On 9th November Shafi and Zābita reached Bidauli, 10 miles south-east of Karnal. Here the Sikh sardars, Sāhib Singh and his confederates, met the two generals and discussed terms for their engagement.*

The allies crossed over to the western bank of the Jamuna and halted at Kunjpura near Karnal. Here the short-tempered Shafi "behaved like a child" (as Najaf Khan told the Maratha ambassador) and imprisoned Gajpat Singh and three other Sikh chiefs in order to squeeze money out of them (*c.* 8 Dec.) Zābita Khan objected to this policy of coercion towards his hereditary supporters, and, angry with his colleague for his obstinacy, returned to Delhi with his own contingent (10 Dec.) Shafi was thus left alone, and taking advantage of his depleted strength, the

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* The whole of this narrative of Shafi's Sikh expeditions has been constructed by piecing together the minute information supplied by Br. Mus. Or. 25,020 and 25,021 (*Akhbar*) with some small additions from *DC*, *Ibrat.* ii. 16-17, Muna Lal 227, *DY.* i. 20, 23, 28, 35, and *MD.* i. 45, 53. Williams, in *Calcutta Review* (1870), needs correction.

Akh. 20*b*, "severe battle between Desu S. and Amar S., the latter driven into Patiala fort (*c.* 14 Feb. 1780.)" 389*a*.—Interneeine fighting among the Sikhs, some have seized much of Kaithal Estate, others are levying contribution in Patiala territory (*c.* 10 Nov. 1780.) 3*a*, rival sardars fight for Thaneshwar (*c.* 15 Sep. 1780).

Sikhs made an incursion into the Saharanpur district, now vacated by both the Mughal generals. Shafi made a forced march from Kunjpura into the Doab. The Sikh raiding bands joined together near the city of Saharanpur and offered battle in the full confidence of victory and contempt for the imperial forces. But Shafi was not Abdul Ahad; his well-served artillery and trained sepoy musketeers carried destruction into the Sikh ranks. At last the enemy broke and fled back to their homes across the Jamuna. Shafi pursued them so close that in their precipitate flight many of the Sikhs were drowned in the river. Their greatest leader Sāhib Singh Khonda was among the slain.*

On the heels of the vanquished, Shafi returned to the Karnal district. On 6th April his lieutenant Mir Mansur fought a severe battle near Indri (15 miles north of Karnal) and defeated a Sikh host, slaying 150 of their men, including their commander Ratan Singh. They fell back to near Radaur (12 miles north of Indri), while the imperialists planted their outposts at

* The only authority for this battle is Muna Lal, 277. Williams, in *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 60, p. 35, tells the same story, but among other errors and exaggerated figures (such as that the Sikhs lost upwards of 5,000 men), he gives the date as 15 Aug. and the place as Mirat. It is a recorded fact that shortly after 15 Aug. the Emperor rewarded Shafi with a robe of honour, which reached him on 3rd Sep. For what service was it? Mid-August is not the time for the march of large armies.

Indri and Husainpur. Lesser encounters frequently took place. Shafi finally pushed on to Sadhaura, 23 miles east of Ambala, in the fork between the Chautang and Mārkanda rivers at the foot of the hills. Here he encamped for some time. His position soon became untenable. While the Sikhs were gathering strength, his appeals to Delhi for men money and munitions remained unheeded. Najaf Khan was a bankrupt and could not meet punctually even the monthly subsistence of the Emperor's household which was the first charge upon the Treasury. Every officer who was asked to go to Shafi's relief demanded money for equipping and feeding his troops before he would move one step. Some forces were, however, sent to guard the Doab in May. Shafi's powder and shot had been exhausted in the recent encounters and yet his supply was not replenished from Delhi except with mere promises. Similar wordy answers met his repeated demands for money to pay his starving soldiers with, till at last they began to make rows in his camp and leave it in hundreds. In fact, Shafi's force was disrupted and he had to look on in utter helplessness. The commander wrote to his chief in bitterness of spirit, "You have spoilt the business of realising money. It is therefore better to disband my force."

Many imperial captains were paid by assignments on the revenue of the upper Doab; the Sikh raids dried up this source of their income

and made it impossible for them to feed and maintain their contingents. It was, therefore, necessary to police this region effectively against the raiders. But that task could be accomplished only with the cooperation of Zabita Khan who had large landed interests there and the addition of whose family forces would give any imperial general detached to the Doab a decisive superiority over the Sikhs. Najaf Khan therefore did his best to court Zabita and send him to the upper Doab to join Shafi and promote the Emperor's cause in unison. But the concert between the two generals on which the success of the enterprise depended, was impossible. The Persian and the Ruhela were too young and too haughty to work in harness together. In addition to this temperamental obstacle, Zabita demanded money for supporting his troops, which the Delhi Government could not pay, and he was not at heart willing to crush the Sikhs who had been his sole allies in the past and might be so again in his hour of need. These internal causes ensured the failure of Najaf Khan's Sikh expedition and he had ultimately to take recourse to a compromise with them.

By the end of May 1781 Mirzā Najaf had realised the wisdom of making terms with the Sikhs through Zābita, as Shafi had proved himself an impossible agent for dealing with them. In order to release the large imperial army under Shafi for operations in another

quarter and to be free from fear about Sikh invasions in the north Delhi region and the Doab, he decided to make money concessions to the Sikhs and turn them into paid servants in the Empire's wars. He therefore released Gajpat Singh, after settling his tribute at six lakhs of Rupees. Gajpat was given his *congee* at the Delhi Court with a robe of honour and other costly gifts and the title of Maharajah (12th July 1781),—thus founding the house of Jhind. Najaf's parting words to him were, "Let the lands in Sikh possession remain with the Sikhs. Do you and they come and join our army." [*DY.* i. 35. *DC.*] The terms of this pact were that the Sikhs would not raid the imperial territory any more but serve in the Delhi army for pay when called upon, in return for their being now formally confirmed in the possession of their estates, roughly the region north of Panipat, and granted the right of levying blackmail (called *rakhi,* about two annas for every Rupee of the standard land revenue due to the State) in the region from Panipat to the walls of Delhi and the upper Doab. Najaf Khan only repeated what the Sayyid brothers had done 62 years earlier in respect of the Maratha claim to blackmail in Mughal Deccan.

In June Shafi was ordered to canton for the rainy season at Radaur. But he took post at the ford between Nakum and Tābar on the Jamuna, 8 miles south-east of that place, and finally fell

back on his base at Kunjpurā, 21 miles further south. Here he remained in a state of suspended activity till the death of Najaf Khan.

§ 6. *Revolution in Delhi Government's diplomatic policy; anti-English coalition sought to be built up by the Peshwa.*

This reversal of alliances needs explanation. Ever since his undesired seclusion in Allahabad fort, Shah Alam's heart had been growing sorer and sorer against the English. After their treaty with him in 1765 they had promised to escort him to his capital. To his demands for the fulfilment of this promise, the English generals had again and again replied that they would do so when the rainy season was over. Year followed year, but those rains seemed never to come to an end. At last the recluse of Allahabad had taken fortune into his own lands and made his way to his fathers' capital with Maratha help, unaided by a single British officer. Even the districts of Allahabad and Kora,—his own ancient and legitimate territory, which they had left to him in 1765, had been afterwards unceremoniously taken away by them and sold to the Wazir of Oudh. This Wazir, though a servant of his Government and a vassal of his empire, had been protected by British arms in defying his sovereign by refusing to pay the customary fine on succession and the annual surplus revenue of his fertile subahs, and even

to share with him the imperial jagirs in Rohilkhand which he had usurped with British aid; and he had persistently defaulted in his duty of attending his lawful sovereign's levee as a functionary bound by his office tenure.

The English Company had secured from him a grant of the diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, which legitimatized their enjoyment of the revenue of the richest provinces in India; but they had stopped paying him the tribute of 26 lakhs of Rupees a year which was the condition of that grant. At first they accounted for the default by the great famine in Bengal, and afterwards by the troubled condition of English affairs due to the wars in the Deccan. In every letter of excuse written by the English Governor, profuse protestations of loyalty to the Emperor and readiness to please him were made, but not a pice of that tribute was offered. Warren Hastings gave the soothing assurance that he had made a representation about this tribute to his masters in London, and was only waiting for their commands. The poor deluded Shah Alam did not know that the representation was for stopping the tribute altogether, but he felt all the same that he would never see English money again.

These grievous wrongs could be righted only by force, but where was that force to be found? The sovereign's one hope lay in a loyal and enterprising Peshwa, because no other

Power in India could face the English with any chance of success; and therefore the Delhi Court turned to the Peshwa with growing wistfulness but deepening doubt. We see the movements on this diplomatic chess-board almost day to day in the despatches of the Peshwa's envoy (Hingané) at Delhi and the repetitions of them in Mahadji Sindhia's letters to the Puna Court, throughout 1780 and 1781. But immediately after the Delhi Government had attained to unity of control and accession of strength through Najaf Khan's triumph over Abdul Ahad at the close of 1779, began a period in which the star of Britain rose in unclouded majesty to the ascendant in the Indian firmament. The reverse to Cockburn at Talegaon (January 1779) was wiped off; Goddard captured Ahmadabad on 15th Feb. 1780, Popham scaled the hitherto impregnable fortress of Gwalior on 3rd August, Goddard took Bassein on 11th December, and Camac defeated the last Maratha hope, Mahadji Sindhia, at Sipri on 16th February 1781.

These far-resounding victories destroyed the chance of every anti-English coalition in India and cowed every Indian Power hostile, in act or feeling, towards them. Mirzā Najaf Khan was not the man to underrate the military strength of the men from beyond the seas; he had faced their bayonets at Undhuā Nālā in 1763 and he had brigaded his horse with their infantry in 1764; he would not drag the Emperor into a war with

such a race unless it was undertaken by an allied force so overwhelmingly strong as to make assurance of victory doubly sure.

§ 7. *Futility of the Maratha plots in the North.*

Throughout the years 1780 and 1781, down to the very signing of a treaty of peace by Mahadji Sindhia with the English (October 1781), we witness a scene of futile plotting at Delhi* which would be exquisitely comic were it not unspeakably sad to every reflective Indian. The Peshwa, hard pressed by the enemy in the Deccan, was, for his own safety, urging the Emperor to take the plunge and openly join him in the war then raging with the English,—who had swallowed Bengal and Oudh, and now taken Bundelkhand, Gwalior and the Carnatic, and were intriguing with the Rajput Rajahs for a joint drive to conquer the Jat country and Malwa, so that the capture of Delhi would be most easy to them. [Raj. xii. 5.] The Emperor, through Najaf Khan, gave repeated assurances to the Maratha envoy and promised to set out at the head of his army openly against the English "after the rainy season" ; but he rightly stipulated that before he could do so the Peshwa himself or his best generals must come to Northern India

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* *Dilli-yethil M. Rajkaranen*, i. (partly repeats and mostly supplements Rajwade, xii.) Also (echoes) in *Gwalior Papers*, 5 vols.

with a vast army, lest the English should anticipate them by making a forced march from Oudh territory and capturing defenceless Delhi! [Raj. xii. 7, 55, 56. *DY*. i. 14, 34, 37.]

It was a case of one drowning man clutching the neck of a still more helpless swimmer in the expectation that both would be saved thereby. Neither ally could really trust the other. Hingané very early discovered, what required no great acumen to guess, that Najaf Khan did not mean business and was only putting him off with smooth words; "he is really waiting to see which side proves stronger." [*DY*. 35.] He noticed how the imperial Court was mortally afraid of the English, especially after the capture of Gwalior, —a feat hitherto believed to be impossible and for which Najaf Khan rightly condemned the Maratha generals, asking "How could you lose such a fort?" The Maratha ambassador at Delhi, as a gentleman sent to lie abroad for the benefit of his country, had been trying to suppress every news of Maratha defeat at the hands of the English; but alas, a sort of freelance news-writer at Puna by his secret letters betrayed everything to the Delhi Court. [*DY*. i. 31 and 43.] The Mughal Government was also startled at every rumour of peace feelers having been sent out by the Peshwa to the English and roundly taxed Hingané with his master's planning to lure the Emperor into the anti-English coalition and then

to leave him in the lurch. [Raj. xii. 8. *DY*. i. 34.]

Mahadji Sindhia was for some time confident of the success of such a coalition,—with a confidence born of ignorance. He asserted again and again that the pressure on Western India by Colonel Goddard,, and later on Malwa by Camac, could be relieved and the English driven into a corner by Holkar and Sindhia from Central India and Bhonsla from Nagpur sweeping into Bengal with their countless horse and practising their light foray tactics (*qazzaqi*), which were sure of success. "The Emperor's artillery fires slowly, the English guns fire more quickly; but this advantage of the latter would be neutralized by *qazzaqi* and even their guns would be captured"! [*DY*. i. 6 & 9.] What the Maratha moss-troopers could do by the raiding tactics so dear to the hearts of their old-style leaders was found out by the best exponent of that school of warfare, Malhar Rao Holkar, once against the Abdali and twice when opposed to English discipline. Mahadji had not yet seen the work of De Boigne and his disciplined organisation, and he naturally shared the same illusion. A vast Maratha army for this North Indian campaign was expected to be fitted out by that hereditary insolvent the Peshwa, who could not even pay his Delhi envoy's salary, so that Hingané was driven to live in a beggarly style shameful to the foreign representative of a great Power and

even to starve; as a fellow-sufferer bitterly put it, "Owing to my indebtedness every day is an *ekādashi* or *Shiva-rātri* to me!" [*DY*. i. 10, 81.]

The confabulations at Delhi ultimately ended in nothing. But at one stage of them, in June 1781, Mirza Najaf very wisely decided on preparing for the great enterprise by reducing the number of his enemies; he chose to make friends with the Sikhs by recognising their possession of the lands in the Cis-Satlaj tract. By ending the state of war in that country the large imperial division under Shafi quartered near Karnal could be released and transferred to the upper Doab (at Saharanpur) and maintained there with a body of Sikh auxiliaries and the retainers of Zābita Khan, in order to suppress the local rebels and restore the imperial administration. [*DY*. i. 35.]

But the grand plan died of itself when the First Maratha War was practically concluded by Sindhia's making peace with the English (13th October 1781.) The result of the plotting, however, was that the two years before this peace were spent by the Delhi Government in suspense and inactivity, except for the two campaigns against Jaipur and Sarhind which we have already described.

The respite was used in marrying the Emperor's favourite son, Prince Akbar Shah, (on 2nd May 1781) with the most lavish pomp and ceremony, which involved months of pre-

paration. Only four days later, a severe blow fell on the royal family, Prince Farkhunda Bakht (Mirzā Jahān Shah), a quiet lover of books, died after a short illness, and his baby daughter followed him the same night. Great natural calamities darkened men's look into the future: on 11th June 1781 the capital was swept by an abnormally violent dust-storm; later in the year came a severe earth-quake and a meteor fall near Jhajhar. [Muna Lal 233. *DC.*] Before the end of the year the cause of the imperial Government became hopeless: Najaf Khan was stricken down by a disease which no doctor could cure, and after lingering in bed for months the regent passed away on 6th April. With him departed the last hope of the Mughals in India.

§ 8. *Mirza Najaf's character and achievement.*

The character of Mirzā Najaf Khan has been already critically examined in the attempt to survey his actual work in war and administration. It will, therefore, suffice if we briefly study his real place in Delhi history and appraise his success and failure in different fields and the effect of his death on the State.

Mirzā Najaf Khan Zulfiqār-ud-daulah fills a large place in the memory of the Delhi historian only because he was the last great Muslim

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* Najaf's last illness and death.—*DC*· *Ibrat*. ii. 25-31. Muna Lal 234-237. G. Ali, iii. 150-151.

minister of the Mughal throne. He shines in the sunset hues of the dying empire by contrast with the smaller men who mismanaged the State for two years after him and finally passed the Government of Delhi on to the hands of other creeds and other races. Except in a limited sphere, he had no title to greatness if we are to judge him by his achievements. As a general, he had not the genius and originality of Najib-ud-daulah, nor the robust personal magnetism of the captains of an earlier age whose dash into the thick of the fray had often turned the doubtful tide of combat and whose comradery had cheered the hearts of hard pressed and drooping followers. But he possessed that cool leadership, that power of co-ordination and that skill in the choice of fitting instruments which were indispensable for success in the new system of war that the Europeans had introduced into India. He early realised that mobile field artillery and disciplined foot-musketeers were the decisive factors in this new warfare, and he therefore always set himself to making adequate provision for these two arms, and also to mingling them in effective proportion with the old heavy "Mughal horse." Herein lay his approach to military genius. No Indian chief before Māhādji Sindhiā engaged so many European officers.

His greatest defect was that he was no administrator. Himself illiterate, he lacked the no less unlettered Akbar's royal gift of choosing

the ablest heads for the civil departments, charging them with the basic principles of his administration and seeing that his orders were in general being carried out. Thus it happened that during his two years of unchallenged power over the Central Government, and before that in the management of his jagirs, the revenue administration went to pieces and the resources of the State were neither increased nor husbanded. The great drought and famine which began in upper India in 1780 cannot be held as the true explanation of this failure. Insolvency dogged his steps throughout life and hampered his work at every stage, in spite of his gains in tribute and spoils of war. The reason was that he had no capacity for civil administration, and helplessly left the revenue management of the country in the hands of his Kashmiri Brahman diwans, who in the opinion of the Indian world in that age were a pale reflection of their Muslim fellow-provincials in low cunning and love of peculation.

Even more fatal was his policy, born of indolence and timidity, of parcelling out the portion of the realm still obedient to the Crown among his lieutenants, each one of whom became a subahdar in his own district without the legal status, however, of that high functionary. Below these great semi-independent barons there were petty leaders of bands,—Mughalia Baluch and Afghan,—whom Najaf Khan paid by the grant of

small estates, so that the remnant of the Delhi empire was dismembered into a vast number of feudal baronies which no weaker hand could control. These sucked up the yield of the land and impoverished the Emperor and the army of national defence. This legacy of trouble bequeathed by Mirzā Najaf all but crushed Māhādji Sindhiā and certainly delayed his reconstruction of the imperial administration by four years, a delay which wrought a momentous change in India's destiny.

But the historian cannot deny that Najaf Khan was a statesman in his moderation in the hour of victory, his kindliness to the mass of the people, and his unerring sense of the realities of Indian politics. He never yielded to impulse or pique, never lost his temper, never grasped at more than he could win. Above all, he had the true mark of a born leader of men, he could attract and keep to himself very able lieutenants in war, though not in the more exacting pursuits of peace. His last years cast a benign halo over his memory ; he gave a respite of peace and plenty to the capital. Hence the universal and sincere mourning at his death and the utter despair which his passing caused to the world of Delhi.

CHAPTER XXXII.

REGENCY OF SHAFI AND AFRASIYAB, 1782-84.

§ 1. *Emperor's helplessness after Najaf Khan's death.*

The death of Mirzā Najaf Khan plunged the Court army and people of Delhi into utter bewilderment. Their future appeared impenetrably dark, without a single streak of hope in any corner. There was none to take his place and guard the Empire as he, and Najib-ud-daulah before him, had done. The hereditary Wazir of the empire was a nerveless voluptuary whose mental vacuity could be hardly concealed by his ineffable but superficial polish of manners. The leading Hindu vassal of the State, the heir to the legacy of Mān Singh and Mirzā Rājah Jai Singh, was an imbecile youth engaged day and night in unmanly diversions within his harem. The Ruhela race had been crushed beyond the possibility of producing another leader of men. The Jat royal house was in an even worse state of decay.

Men, therefore, naturally turned to the late commander-in-chief's lieutenants in their quest for his successor. These were four, his chosen

instruments in many an action and his recognised deputies in four different provinces: Afrāsiyāb Khan and Najaf Quli Khan (his two slaves), Mirzā Shafi Khan (his grand-nephew) and Muhammad Beg Hamadāni (the Mughalia leader.) The struggle for power among these four makes up the blood-red history of Delhi during the two years and a half that separate Mirzā Najaf's death from the Emperor's willing surrender to Māhādji Sindhiā as his Regent and commander-in-chief, (April 1782—November 1784.)

Not one of these captains was of such outstanding eminence and prestige as to exact the unquestioning obedience of the other three. To avert a return to feudal anarchy, the Gosāin Himmat Bahadur very wisely urged Shah Alam to become his own commander-in-chief, go forth at the head of the assembled troops, and win back his lost provinces. The master's own leadership would suppress the mutual jealousies of the subordinate generals and cow the rebels and revenue defaulters into obedience without any need of fighting. But Shah Alam II was not cast in the heroic mould of his ancestors; he fell in with the timid counsels of his sycophants and refused to leave the security and pleasures of his palace for the hardships and dangers of a life of campaigning. [*Ibrat.* ii. 31-32.] A successor to Najaf Khan as army chief and regent of the empire had, therefore, to be sought out.

§ 2. *Najaf Khan's four lieutenants; their character.**

Afrāsiyāb Khan was by birth a Hindu grocer's boy whom Mirzā Najaf had captured as an orphan, converted to Islam and made his favourite slave and his adopted son in all but the name. But he had none of his master's military capacity, power over men, or passion for strenuous endeavour. He lacked even the born soldier's dauntless courage and therefore could not command the confidence of the army. The Mughalia captains refused to obey a slave; the foreign Muhammadans despised him as India-born and Hindu of blood. His one source of strength was that portion of Mirzā Najaf's wealth which he had been able to appropriate during his late control of his indolent master's affairs. In addition, the dying Najaf had recommended him to the Emperor as his chosen successor in office and master of his troops and fiefs. For some time after Najaf Khan's death Afrāsiyāb Khan enjoyed the favour of his sister Khadija Sultān Begam, who was universally honoured for her late brother's sake. But when in a few months

* Character: *Afrasiyab*, bania boy, no soldier (Gw. v. 25) slave (*Ibr.* ii. 87, 34), bad temper (*Ibr.* 36, 78, 69, 34), demands Najaf's daughter (G. Ali 211.) *Ibr.* 41, 88. *Shafi*, Muna Lal 256, 273 276. BM. 25,021 *f.* 113. G. Ali 161 (temper.) *Najaf Quli*, Muna Lal 255, G. Ali 157, 209. *Ibr.* 43. *Md. Beg*, Muna Lal 271, '73, '74. *Ibr.* ASB ms. ii. 145. *Zain-ul-abidin*, Muna Lal 242. G. Ali 175.

Afrāsiyāb alienated her, he lost every outside supporter. His new rank and power completely turned his head, and his harshness of speech and violence of temper soon drove all men away from his side, and hastened his downfall.

The second favourite slave and lieutenant of Mirzā Najaf was a Persian named Najaf Quli Khan after his patron. But this officer was constantly sunk in the enjoyment of opium wine and women. His habitual indolence was broken by occasional fits of reckless fighting, but he lacked true generalship and the power of far-sighted scheming. In diplomacy and intrigue he was a mere child and became a tool in the hands of shrewder men.

The most natural successor of Mirzā Najaf would have been his nephew's son Mirza Muhammad Shafi, who could claim the "royal blood of Persia" and with it the homage of the Irāni party. But throughout Najaf's lifetime he had filled only subordinate posts (except in the recent Sikh campaign) because of his extreme youth, so that at the time of his grand-uncle's death he had acquired neither the force nor the prestige requisite for a Mir Bakhshi. Moreover, he bore a frank unsuspicious character; but that world of intrigue treachery and violence was not a place for a simple good-natured man. The result was that during his short enjoyment of the supreme power all his plans miscarried, he bungled in dealing with his rivals, and the

uncongeniality of that atmosphere of universal crooked dealing and hypocrisy so bewildered and irritated him that he burst into frequent fits of temper which alienated his friends. His elder but less prominent brother Zain-ul-abidin Khan was made of a sterner stuff and proved a far abler actor for that stage of fraud and crime.

The most sinister figure among Mirzā Najaf's captains was Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, who combined the treachery and ferocity of the Afghan with the martial efficiency and mercenary spirit of the Turkish soldier of fortune. The small bands under Mughalia sardars long settled in India as professional soldiers ready to join the highest bidder, naturally flocked to Hamadāni on account of his known generalship and firmness of character mingled with diplomatic cunning and address, even more than for the sake of his being a brother from *vilāyet*. His nephew Ismail Beg, too, was one of the best generals of the time. But neither of them could hope for any support from Najaf Khan's Shia sister and personal retainers; they were kept at a distance as mere hirelings unfit to be leaders of the party.

§ 3. *Emperor's policy. General survey of events from 1782 to 1784.*

The history of the next two years and a half was the history of the dissolving and newly forming combinations among these four generals,

into which further complication was introduced by the selfish intrigues of the Oudh general Latāfat Ali Khan, the infinitely patient and timid secret diplomacy of the Emperor, and the cunning moves of the ex-regent Abdul Ahad Khan who for a time emerged from confinement and tried to play the supreme part in the administration once again. Finally, all these forces spent themselves by their internecine contests, three of them (Latāfat, Shafi and Afrāsiyāb) were murdered, Abdul Ahad imprisoned for life, Muhammad Beg stripped of all power, and the stage left absolutely clear at the end of 1784 for the supremacy of Māhādji Sindhiā.

Reduced as the Emperor had been for several years past to impotence, his sole concern was for money,—a regular and copious flow of it,—which could not be expected from the impoverished and mostly alienated Crownlands, nor from the tributes which his vassals were now too strong to pay willingly. At the same time, the large army assembled by Najaf Khan could not get their pay regularly even during that great chief's life time, and after his death the soldiers, with their salaries fallen still more into arrears and starving in the midst of that three years' drought, often broke out in riots, insulting and threatening their officers.

So, the Emperor put a price on the succession to the post of Najaf Khan. Afrāsiyāb thought-

lessly promised him five lakhs and secured the appointment. The inevitable trouble came when he was called upon to keep his word. For the property and treasure accumulated by Najaf Khan a squabble immediately broke out among Afrāsiyāb Khan, Khadija Sultān (who later supported Shafi) and the Emperor. Shah Alam durst not apply the law of escheat to his deceased Mir Bakhshi's legacy, and he therefore asked instead for a heavy sum of first fruits from the new Mir Bakhshi as well as the surrender of the Crownlands to royal agents. Afrāsiyāb, while basking in Mirza Najaf's favour and enjoying in popular report the title of his adopted son, had managed his master's estates and treasury without ever being called to account. Najaf Khan had been too busy with war and Court management to look after his own private affairs; when he needed any money he used to take the amount from Afrāsiyāb without caring to inquire how much was left. Thus, at his death Afrāsiyāb was reported to have appropriated all his wealth amounting to thirty lakhs of Rupees, besides his horses, elephants &c.

The late Mir Bakhshi had left behind him two little daughters, but Afrāsiyāb Khan denied to them the least share in their patrimony. These girls remained in Najaf Khan's Delhi residence in charge of his sister Khadija Sultan, who controlled his personal belongings, ready cash and jewels in the house, and old attendants, as

well as the artillery that guarded his mansion. But her chief source of influence lay in the respect and devotion with which the entire Indian world, from the Emperor downwards, regarded her by reason of her being the sole representative and nearest blood relation of that great noble. Shortly after his death she formed the plan of giving Najaf's elder daughter (then in her eleventh year) in marriage to Mirzā Shafi, getting the post of Mir Bakhshi and the support of Najaf's old adherents for the bridegroom, and governing the State from behind the *parda* through her nominee.

Najaf Khan's extensive fiefs and the Crown-lands which he administered as Regent of the empire were held by his agents at the time of his death: the middle Doab (Aligarh and Jaleswar districts) by Afrāsiyāb Khan, Saharanpur with nominal right to the Karnal district across the Jamuna by Mirzā Muhammad Shafi, Shekhāwati and Mewāt with its centre at Kanud by Najaf Quli Khan, and the Agra-Dholpur region including the conquests from the Jats by Muhammad Beg Hamadāni. These districts now threatened to break up into four independent baronies. Besides, Mirzā Najaf's prolonged and mortal illness, followed by the confusion and fighting for the succession to his post, caused a paralysis of government for nearly a year (1782.) Every local chief and petty military fief-holder seized the lands of his neighbours and extended

his estates in defiance of law and right. Defeated rebels like the Rajah of Bharatpur came out of the refuge of their forts and began to recover their lost possessions up to the very walls of Agra city. The Sikhs and the Ruhela remnant of Najib-ud-daulah's house became even more daring than before.

But the Emperor, his administrative officers and the army were bound to starve unless these Crownlands were brought back to the management of his own collectors and the unauthorised extensions of fiefs were wrested from the hands of the usurping captains. This was a task beyond the power of Shah Alam and the attempts made by his successive regents after Najaf's death to effect it only led to mutinies and their downfall, till at last a supremely strong regent like Māhādji Sindhiā imposed his will and his master's authority on these countless rebels,—and that too after a most dangerous and all but fatal challenge to his authority in 1787-1788.

§ 4. *Afrasiyab appointed Mir Bakhshi. His difficulties and humiliation.*

When the three days of mourning after Mirzā Najaf's death were over (9th April 1782), the Emperor called to his presence all the leading military officers of his late General and asked them to sit down in the ante-room of the Diwan-i-am and elect a new chief for themselves. They could not agree, as the Mughalia captains refused

to obey Afrāsiyāb Khan for being India-born and a slave. The Emperor next paid a visit of condolence to Najaf Khan's sister and invited her to make the choice. She named Afrāsiyāb Khan, that noble was created Regent (*Mukhtiār*) and commander-in-chief (*Mir Bakhshi*, Amir-ul-umara) with the title of Ashraf-ud-daulah. For what had now become the highest office in the State, Afrāsiyāb had to promise a heavy price, namely a fee of five lakhs of Rupees and the monthly supply of one lakh and twenty thousand for the Emperor's household expenses. He scraped together all he could and paid down Rs. 1,87,000 on 11th April, and forthwith received investiture for his office.*

But his difficulties were only beginning. If he was to make sure provision for the future, he must first recover the Crownlands from the hands of usurpers and also suppress the rebels. Ranjit Singh Jat had utilised the illness of Mirzā Najaf to win back some of the lost lands of his father and to send his raiding bands throughout the Agra district. The local governor, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni was unable to cope with the myriads of Jat horse and appealed to Delhi for reinforcement. The new Mir Bakhshi was urged to march with the Emperor

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* *DC.* G. Ali iii. 152-154. Muna Lal 237-243. *Ibrat.* ii. 32-36 Afrasiyab's troubles,—*DY.* i. 84, 71, &c. Prince Jahandar Shah,—in Hastings, *State of India*, appendix.

to his rescue. But it meant a large immediate outlay. The unpaid imperial soldiery had so long managed to live in Delhi on credit, but loans would cease as soon as they left on a distant expedition with the risk of death ; their families could be left behind at the capital only by being supplied with the means of sustenance for some months in advance. Bringing the neglected cavalry and artillery up to the equipment necessary for a campaign meant heavy expenditure. And the Emperor's personal staff and camp equipage required another large advance before they could be ready to start.

Afrāsiyāb could not provide all this money. On the plea of the hot weather and the Emperor's recent attack of fever, he secured an order that Prince Jawān Bakht should accompany the expedition in stead of his father. The prince took his formal leave at Court (*c.* 15th May) and went into tents outside Delhi, waiting for his army to assemble. Nearly a month passed, but that army did not assemble nor showed any sign of ever assembling, because Afrāsiyāb could not raise the necessary funds. He had already exhausted his cash resources, and when he begged for a loan from Najaf Khan's sister, she gave him a sharp rebuff. So, the Emperor, realising that the expedition could not possibly start, recalled the prince (12th June.)

Afrāsiyāb's prestige suffered by this public failure within a month of his assuming the

regency, and the Emperor's heart was turned against him. And he added to the number of his enemies by calling up Najaf Khan's captains to the capital and demanding that they should bring their assigned quotas of troops to the muster, retain only as much jagir as was justified by the actual strength of their contingents, and relinquish all the excess lands to the State; for otherwise he could not meet his master's demands for money. At once a revolt against his authority broke out. The malcontents won Begam Khadija Sultan over to their side and opposed the new Mir Bakhshi. These distractions, even more than the pride of power, soured the temper of Afrāsiyāb Khan. The plotters looked up to Mirzā Muhammad Shafi (the son of Najaf Khan's nephew) as their leader. Shafi, then posted in the Karnal district, quickly patched up a truce with the Sikhs and set out for Delhi.

§ 5. *Afrasiyab counteracts Shafi's rivalry.*

At the report of his rival's approach Afrāsiyāb Khan was filled with despair. His first patron, the sister of Mirzā Najaf, had now become his enemy and he must look out for support elsewhere. He publicly renounced all his former connection with Najaf Khan's family and interests and prayed to the Emperor to be regarded as an imperial officer in future. Still further pursuing the policy of placating the Emperor, he gave up

the control of the palace fort; Najaf's battalions which had so long garrisoned it were withdrawn (29th June), and the gates were placed in charge of the Emperor's own guards 'the Red Battalion', under Ahmad Ali Khan. Rightly suspecting that Shafi's march upon the capital was due to a secret call from Shah Alam and Begam Khadija, Afrāsiyāb Khan took prompt measures for self-defence. On 16th June he left the Mir Bakhshi's official residence, where he had so long been living with Najaf's sister and family, and removed to Abdul Ahad Khan's house, then under official escheat, taking with himself that deposed old regent from his prison in Najaf's mansion. This was the first step on the path of regaining the Emperor's favour, because every one knew that Shah Alam's heart was unalterably fixed on Ahad. The next step was to restore Ahad to the regency* and his position at the right hand of the Emperor, so that Afrāsiyāb could always have the strongest friend at Court. But such a political resurrection took time. Ahad, knowing himself powerless to effect anything in that stormy world, long refused

* Taking advantage of Afrāsiyāb's difficulties, the Emperor succeeded (29 June) in making him withdraw the Mir Bakhshi's guards and gunners from the palace-fort and give up the control of it to the imperial guards (the *Lāl Paltan*) under the Emperor's own agent Ahmad Ali Kh. *DY*. i. 84. *DC*.

to take office again. Everything was in confusion in the central Government. The Exchequer was empty, the Emperor and his household were starving. As the Maratha envoy in Delhi wrote at this time, "The soldiers get no money for buying food. Even Najaf Khan's personal guards are fasting; their horses and elephants are dying for lack of fodder. Even the Begam (Khadija Sultan)'s household cannot procure their food every day; at present they have been fasting for three days." [*Or.* 25,021 *f.* 112-115. *DY.* i. 84.]

While Afrāsiyāb was busy weaving his web, Shafi arrived near Delhi. Hitherto his position had been irregular: he was a captain who had left his post without orders, and was trying to make an unauthorised entrance into the capital. But the unprincipled wavering character of Shah Alam came to Shafi's rescue. The Emperor rejoiced to see this internecine war among Najaf Khan's lieutenants and expected that it would weaken them all so much that in the end he would be left supreme. Encouraged by a friendly message from his sovereign, Shafi entered Delhi, visited Khadija Begam, who took him into her arms as a son, and promised to marry Najaf's daughter to him, place him at the head of the household and troops of the late commander-in-chief, and secure the Mir Bakhshi's office for him.

§ 6. *The rival generals assemble forces in Delhi city; riots threatened.*

On 14th July Shafi was formally received in audience.* But no post was given to him for a month, as he would not agree to the high price at which the Court had put the regency up to sale. The other two lieutenants of Mirzā Najaf had been summoned to the capital. One of them, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, was a partisan of Shafi, and had at a hint from Shafi, patched up a truce with the Jat Rajah and then crossed into the middle Doab for plundering Gosāin Himmat Bahadur's jagirs. This Gosāin was Afrāsiyāb's right hand man, and Afrāsiyāb's own jagir in Aligarh was now threatened with invasion. The other, Najaf Quli Khan, marched from the Jaipur border towards Delhi, apparently to join Shafi; but Afrāsiyāb intercepted him at Gurgāon (17 July), won him over by personal entreaty, and brought him to Delhi the next day. The rival forces were thus marshalled:—Afrāsiyāb, Najaf Quli and Latāfat Ali, with the helpless Abdul Ahad in one camp; Shafi, Khadija Begam and all the personal retainers of Mirzā Najaf, with the absent Muhammad Beg Hamadāni in the other. The capital was once more threatened with a civil war to be fought out in its streets. All this time the soldiers were starving and distracted, not

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* *DC.* G. Ali iii. 154-156. Muna Lal 244-253. *Ibrat.* ii. 36-43. *DY.* i. 71.

knowing who was the lawful authority and not caring to follow any general with fidelity. "Every one wishes to make himself dominant, and great disturbance prevails." [Hingane's report, *DY*. i. 84.]

But the threatening storm did not burst at once. Two months more were to pass in alarms and excursions, plotting and counterplotting at Court, before the contest was put to the arbitrament of the sword. After long negotiations, in which the harem superintendent Nāzir Manzur Ali warmly backed Shafi, the Emperor decided to appoint him Mir Bakhshi, for a fee of five lakhs, on the next auspicious day, which was the first of the sacred month of Ramzān (10th August.) This was a crushing blow to Afrāsiyāb; but he promptly countered it by begging the Emperor to restore Abdul Ahad to the head of his administration. Shah Alam jumped at the prospect of getting his bosom friend back after three years of enforced separation. The appointment of a new Mir Bakhshi was put off, and instead of it Abdul Ahad was received again at Court and reappointed to all his former posts (11th August.)

Shafi was furious on meeting with this sudden reverse. "He felt that without a fight Afrāsiyāb could not be made to tread the right path; but out of respect for the throne he did not wish to engage in hostilities at the capital." [ML. 252.] With huge rival armies scowling

and growling at each other in the same city, and that city without any magistrate or police guard, a conflict could not be long averted. On 21st August, a personal altercation between Jamāl Khan of Afrāsiyāb's army and Pauli a German mercenary captain on Shafi's side, spread to their respective followers like a wildfire. They flew to arms and dragging out their artillery barricaded the streets of Delhi, facing each other along a long line from the Kashmiri gate to the Jāmi' Masjid, as well as the Tripolia and the neighbourhood of the Kābuli gate. But the Emperor sent his chief eunuch to forbid fighting and the two sides withdrew. So, Delhi knew peace again, but it was for that day only. On the 24th the rival hosts again came out and dug trenches across the city, but again went back to their quarters at the Emperor's appeal.

§ 7. *Shafi's coup of 10 Sep. 1782; he takes Abdul Ahad and Najaf Quli prisoner, and is appointed Mir Bakhshi and Regent.*

At last, to remove this constant threat of riot, the Emperor sent Afrāsiyāb off (3rd Sep.) to his own jagir in the Doab, which had been invaded by Muhammad Beg Hamadāni in the interests of Shafi. Najaf Quli Khan was left as his representative in Delhi. This gay toper was no match for Shafi. He provoked that general by his hostile designs, without taking adequate steps for

defeating him or even for self-defence. Najaf Quli removed from Abdul Ahad's house and occupied that of Safdar Jang in order to be close to the fort and to guide his troops more easily. But his days and nights were devoted to wine and women and he neglected every military precaution. This was Shafi's opportunity. The month of fasting ended and the Feast of Rejoicing (*Id-ul-fitr*) was celebrated on 10th September. That night* Shafi sent a strong force with artillery under Pauli to encircle the houses of Ahad and Najaf Quli, and the task was effected without opposition. By that time Najaf Quli was lying senseless with drink ; his house contained only a small guard and five pieces of cannon. Waking up at dawn, he maintained a brave defence against heavy odds for a day and a night. Shafi, seated on the steps of the Jāmi' Masjid (11th), kept directing the attack and encouraging his troops by scattering handfuls of Rupees every now and then among them.

Abdul Ahad could offer no resistance. At noon some of Shafi's soldiers broke into his mansion, and, in order to preserve the sanctity of his harem the aged regent came out and made an abject surrender to Shafi, who sent him into honourable captivity again in Qamr-ud-din's

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* *DC*. G. Ali iii. 156-160. Muna Lal 254-256. *Ibrat*. ii 43-46. *DY*. i. 71. Jahandar Shah in Hastings, *State of India*, appendix.

mansion. His Hindu associate, Rajah Shivarām diwān, was dishonoured and thrown into prison. Najaf Quli's bravest lieutenant Jalāl Khan Afghān was shot dead when charging through the enemy ranks, and his master's cause now became hopeless, though Sayyid Ali Khan, a battalion commandant on Shafi's side, had also fallen. So, next morning (12th Sep.) Najaf Quli went to Begam Khadija to make his surrender, and was placed under surveillance.

Thus Mirzā Muhammad Shafi was left without a rival in Delhi. On the 15th of the month (September 1782), the Emperor recognised the fact by appointing him Mir Bakhshi with the title of Nāsir-ud-daulah Zulfiqār Jang and also supreme Regent and subahdar of Agra. But a month had barely passed from this when there was another turn in the political kaleidoscope, an entirely new grouping of forces took place, and Shafi was driven out of Delhi! On becoming regent he wisely tried to make friends with his late rivals. He sent friendly letters from himself and the Begam to Afrāsiyāb Khan, who professed to be reconciled and thus secured an order on Hamadāni to vacate Afrāsiyāb's jagirs and return to his own post. But Shafi alienated Najaf Quli by transferring the jagirs of the latter to his own follower Abdul Matlab Khan. The new army chief was a rather simple downright man, incapable of suppleness or diplomatic finesse ; his

soldierly brusqueness offended the Court circle,* and the evil was aggravated by his lack of funds. Even the Emperor was at heart his enemy, especially as he failed to release all the Crown-lands in his hands. The eunuch Latāfat Ali, commanding four trained battalions of Purbia infantry, had sworn on the Qurān to be true to Shafi. He now started an intrigue at the instigation of the Emperor, and seduced Pauli and the officers of his contingent.

Meantime, Shafi had been driven to the verge of madness by his financial difficulties. Two of his battalions mutinied for their pay and planted their guns against his gate. They were pacified by a payment in part, and Shafi determined to extort funds from the Emperor, which led to an open rupture and exchange of angry words between him and his sovereign (9th October.)

§ 8. *Emperor's coup, 16th Oct.; Shafi expelled from Delhi.*

The crisis came on 16th October. Early at dawn Latāfat and Pauli marched† with their troops against Qamr-ud-din's mansion where Shafi lived. The Emperor himself rode out to the Jāmi' Masjid in order to lend his blessing

* The Emperor remarked, on 16 June 1782, "Mirza Shafi has a short temper. Let us see how he agrees with others." Br. Mus. Or. 25, 021, *f*. 113.

† *DC*. G. Ali iii. 161-165. Muna Lal 256-262. *Ibrat*. ii. 47-49. *DY*. i. 74, 75.

to the attack. Shafi wisely decided not to resist his sovereign. He fled away towards Agra, taking Abdul Ahad with him, but in his hurry forgetting Najaf Quli, who was promptly set free by Latāfat. All the artillery and material left behind were plundered, but none of the victors ventured to touch Khadija Begam, in spite of the Emperor's wrath against her. Shah Alam now dismissed Shafi from his offices and recalled Afrāsiyāb to Court. Days passed in fruitless negotiations, but Khadija Begam continued to hold out in Najaf Khan's mansion with the loyal support of her late brother's gunners under Ashur Ali Khan.

The fugitive Shafi with his own troops rode hard from Delhi to Ballabhgarh and thence to Kosi. Here he came to a halt and gained the adhesion of Muhammad Beg Hamadāni and his strong force by appealing to the memory of their late common patron and also promising to give him all the Jaipur tribute, half the artillery and other property of Mirzā Najaf still left in Shafi's hands, and six lakhs in cash or fresh jagirs. Hamadāni joined Shafi at Kosi, and here all the former captains of Najaf Khan vowed to recognise Shafi as their master. Then the two set their faces (6th November) towards Delhi, expelling the imperial collectors in Hodal district and camping on arrival at Faridabad.

The close approach of the rebel generals alarmed the Emperor. He was hustled by Latāfat and Pauli into entering his tents near

Bārapula for a march against them (12th Nov.) From Faridabad the rebels sent their envoys to him (14th) to offer their protestations of loyalty and to seek his pardon and restoration to their former offices and honours. Shah Alam entrusted his case to his favourite personal servant Kallu Khawās, entitled Muhammad Yaqub Khan, who conceived the over-cunning design of secretly corrupting Hamadāni and using him to destroy Shafi. On behalf of the Emperor, he promised the Mir Bakhshi-ship to Hamadāni if he abandoned Shafi. For confirming this pact it was agreed that Latāfat should meet and give personal assurances and oaths to Muhammad Beg.

§ 9. *Muhammad Beg Hamadāni seizes Latafat Ali and Pauli (17th Nov. 1782.) Shafi is restored to supremacy at Delhi Court.*

This treacherous plot recoiled on the heads of its parents.* Muhammad Beg disclosed it to Shafi. On 17th November he rode out of his camp for the purpose of meeting Latāfat and then going with him to be presented to the Emperor, while Shafi went elsewhere on the pretext of hunting, but kept his ears open for the pre-concerted signal. Near Khwājah Sarāi, on the south side of the Badarpur *nāla*, Latāfat,

* *DC.* G. Ali iii. 166-174. Muna Lal 263-267. *Ibrat.* ii 50-54 and ASB ms. *DY.* i. 77. Jahandar Shah in Hastings, *State of India*, app.

Pauli and Yaqub met Muhammad Beg, but Hamadāni made them all prisoners by a treacherous attack at the time of shaking hands. The European alone resisted and was wounded for his pains. The small escort of the three victims fled away from superior numbers, while the main body of their comrades, left behind in the imperial camp, could do nothing after the loss of all their leaders. Muhammad Beg quickly followed up his victory; he pushed a detachment on to Delhi (now left utterly defenceless) with orders to seize the houses and property of Latāfat and Yaqub. But Shafi's brother, who was with the Begam in the city, appropriated their property before the arrival of Hamadāni's men. "A tumult like that of Doomsday raged in Delhi that night."

Afrāsiyāb was no soldier; he had been propped up by the strong arm of Pauli and the subtle brain of Latāfat, and with their fall his power at once collapsed. This second turn of the kaleidoscope brought back the old picture, only two of the bits of glass were thrown away. The wretched Shah Alam, after thus once beating his head against the bars of his cage, again lapsed into helpless submission. Muhammad Beg and Shafi wrote protesting their loyalty to him and excusing their late conduct as forced on them by their rival's treachery. The Emperor sent his eldest son to convey his pardon and blessings to them, and then returned to Delhi (24th Nov.) As he entered the fort, in the courtyard of the

Diwān-i-'ām, Shafi, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, Abdul Ahad and Afrāsiyāb placed the poles of his open sedan chair on their shoulders and conveyed it to the door of his harem enclosure. After this parade of loyalty, they went to pay their respects to Begam Khadija Sultan. Shafi was restored to his post of army chief and the others received robes of honour and gifts.

Next day Hamadāni blinded Latāfat Ali to prevent him from creating trouble again. Pauli objected to such mutilation and was hacked to pieces. The eunuch Kallu Khawās escaped by paying a large ransom.*

§ 10. *Shafi and Prince go to regulate Agra province; their operations there* (1783.)

On 22nd December Mirzā Md. Shafi was given *congee* for Agra to undertake the pacification and administration of that province. He took Prince Sulaimān Shukoh and Najaf's sister with him. The prince entered Agra fort on 23rd January 1783. The prestige of his name and the armed strength of the Mir Bakhshi cowed most of the rebels of that part. He spent the next two months there, "enforcing order and doing justice to the people," and "that region enjoyed peace and orderly government once

* Najaf Quli had left the Emperor's side in disgust and alarm and gone back to his fief of Narnaul about 15th Nov. Hamadāni was given *congee* from Delhi on 10th Dec. 1782.

more."* Here Major James Browne, who had been sent by Warren Hastings on a mission to the imperial Court, waited upon the Mir Bakhshi (on 27th Feb.) in order to prepare the ground for his visit to the Emperor.

Early next month a vast Sikh horde, on return from the middle Doab, threatened Delhi from the north, approaching so close to the capital as to assault the village of Barāri, set fire to the marts at Mālikganj and Sabzimandi, and kill some people in Mughalpurā (8th March.) At the urgent call of the Court, Shafi set out from Sikandra (15th March) for the relief of the capital. But meantime on the movement of Zain-ul-abidin and his troops from Bāghpat to Delhi, the raiders had fled away (12th March.) Shafi therefore gave up his northward march and turned against the Jat Rajah. Ranjit Singh had already made terms with Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, but Shafi refused to honour this settlement. Ranjit was willing to pay the tribute, but not to cede the jagirs of his son Randhir Singh as now demanded. Shafi therefore invaded the Jat country, marching from Agra by way of Fathpur Sikri to Sayyidpur. Making this village his base, he besieged the fort of Bayānā, three miles south of it, and took it by assault, with heavy

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* *DC.* G. Ali iii. 175-177. Muna Lal 268. *Ibrat.* ii. 55-58, 61-62. These references cover the next section also. Raj. xii. 35.

slaughter, in 33 days (9th May.) Akhegarh and other Jat forts in that region were evacuated by their garrisons in terror and the whole district of Bayānā came under imperial control. A detachment from Shafi's army was meantime fighting the Macheri Rajah's troops near Firuzpur Jharka ; Shafi now went to their aid and began to bombard the strong fortalice of Kanwāri Pahāri (? Pahāri-Kandla.) But soon afterwards he returned southwards for the purpose of meeting Māhādji Sindhiā on the Chambal and maturing a pact with him. Hamadāni met him on the way (10th June), and the quarrel that blazed forth between these two rival generals brought Shafi's hitherto successful work to a close.

§ 11. *Quarrel between Shafi and Hamadāni.*

It is necessary to trace the growth of this quarrel from its origin. We have seen how Muhammad Beg's faithless cunning and ruthless vigour had been the sole instrument in ridding Shafi of his only powerful enemies, Latāfat and Pauli, and restoring him to his supremacy at Court (17th Nov. 1782.) But the hour of victory was also the hour of rupture between the allies. Shafi could not fulfill the exorbitant promises of money lands and war-material by means of which he had bought his ally's support. In addition, Muhammad Beg's pride and ambition were as boundless as his violence and dishonesty. After the *coup* against Latāfat and Pauli, Hamadāni's licen-

tious soldiery were allowed to plunder the innocent imperial subjects in the villages along the road to Delhi and in the capital itself. Shafi rightly objected to it, and on his protests being unheeded he gave up speaking to his ally. Hamadāni retorted by rising in his demands and claiming (*a*) twelve lakhs worth of fresh jagirs, (*b*) half the artillery and other property of the late Mirzā Najaf and (*c*) the transfer to him of the entire imperial claims on Jaipur. Shafi also objected to Hamadāni making himself the mediator of the Macheri Rajah at Court and thus robbing the Mir Bakhshi of the tribute due from him. The quarrel was aggravated by Shafi's demand for a fair partition of the spoils taken in Latāfat and Pauli's camps and city residences, and all efforts to patch it up failed. Muhammad Beg therefore left Delhi on 10th December 1782 for his post on the Jaipur frontier practically in open defiance of the imperial Government.

Arrived at Agra, Hamadāni extorted a forced contribution from the traders and bankers of the city and plundered the poorer people. He next won Ranjit Singh's support for himself in the coming duel with his late partner, by fixing a reduced tribute on him and stopping the punitive operations against the Jat territory. The Macheri Rajah was already his *protege*. Thus Hamadāni threatened to set up an independent principality of his own in the Agra-Mewat province and overshadow the authority of the imperial regent

there. His army was increased out of all proportion to his rank or his means of paying it. His fame as the ablest general then living drew the Mughalia mercenaries to him as their most promising employer. Herein the greatest danger to the Emperor's lawful Government was coming to a head.

When Shafi, with Prince Sulaimān Shukoh in his leading strings, reached Agra (January 1783), Hamadāni waited on the prince. Shafi tried to conciliate him by reaffirming his past promises. So, Hamadāni went back towards Jaipur, after exacting a tribute from the Kerauli Rajah on the way.

§ 12. *Shafi intrigues with Mahadji Sindhia for help in crushing Hamadani. Sindhia visits Prince and Shafi (June 1783.)*

Shafi now set himself to weakening his formidable rival. He had already begun intrigues for seducing Muhammad Beg's captains (esp. the Mughalias), and this plan was continued with vigour. His confidants, Afrāsiyāb Khan and Gosāin Himmat Bahadur, confirmed his belief that so long as Hamadāni lived his own position as the head of the Government could not be safe. But Hamadāni could be crushed only with the help of Māhādji Sindhia,* whose fame as the

* BM. Or. 25,021, *f.* 91-96, 116-187 (newsletters, 2 June-10 July,) best. *DC.* Muna Lal 272. *Ibrat.* ii. 62-64. *DY.* i. 68, 65. *Chandra* ii. 35, 50. Satara i. 69.

friend of the English and the mediator of their treaty with the Peshwa had raised him to the highest place among the indigenous Powers of N. India. Shafi therefore sent Himmat Bahadur to Sindhia's camp in Malwa for contriving this alliance. The negotiations, however, took long to mature.

In order to weaken Hamadāni, Mirzā Shafi wrote in the name of the Emperor to the Jaipur Rajah forbidding him to pay his due tribute to Muhammad Beg. He also attacked Ranjit Singh, in spite of Hamadāni's appeal to save his prestige by respecting the settlement he had already made with that chieftain. The situation became intolerable in consequence of Shafi's vigorous campaign against the Jat Rajah. So, on 10th June 1783, Md. Beg came to Shafi for ending their quarrel by a personal discussion. After angry recriminations between the two, Shafi patched up a truce by promising his approval to Hamadāni's friendly policy towards the Jat and Macheri chiefs, as he was in a hurry to meet Sindhia on the appointed day.

Months before this Mirzā Shafi had appealed to Sindhia through Himmat Bahadur, "Let us once meet together for clearing our hearts towards each other. Najaf Khan was your sworn brother. He is now dead, and after him you are as a father to me. Do act as my guide." Sindhia held off for a long time as his hands were full with other business. But in June he agreed to meet

Shafi if that general left Muhammad Beg Hamadāni behind and came alone with only the prince and Najaf's sister. The Mir Bakhshi, after his meeting with Hamadāni at Nagar (15 miles west of Dig), hastened to Agra, took the prince and Najaf's sister out of it with himself, and by way of Fathpur Sikri and Kagarol reached Basai, 16 miles north-west of Dholpur (22nd June.) Muhammad Beg encamped six miles behind him. Mahadji, leaving his army engaged in the siege of Gwalior fort, came up to the south bank of the Chambal with a light escort. Shafi, stationing his camp and troops eight miles behind, advanced with a small party to the opposite bank, near Dholpur.

On 27th June, 1783, Sindhia paid his first visit to Shafi. Three days later the Maratha chief rode out to the imperialist camp and was presented to the prince by the regent. The British Resident David Anderson and his assistants were introduced by Māhādji to the prince. Major Browne, in the train of the Mir Bakhshi, was introduced by Shafi to Sindhia. Four days were passed here in cementing the alliance, through the mediation of Himmat Bahadur. Sindhia also visited Begam Khadija and offered his condolences on the death of her great brother. Shafi exchanged turbans with Māhādji, professed entire obedience to his orders, and entreated him to come to Delhi for restoring order to the confused imperial administration

and making some permanent good arrangement for the maintenance and defence of the Emperor. Māhādji, in reply, promised to go to Delhi after the rainy season, by which time he hoped to bring his Gwalior and Gohad enterprises to a happy termination. The party broke up on 1st July, Sindhia going back to his trenches before Gwalior and the imperialists to Dig (where the prince arrived on 18th July.)

§ 13. *Hamadani murders Md. Shafi, 23 Sep. 1783.*

When Mirzā Shafi invited Māhādji Sindhia and made friends with him, Hamadāni realised that the Mir Bakhshi was utterly faithless and co-operation with him was impossible. He then broke out into open independence, disobeying Shafi's orders and plundering his subah of Agra. The Mirza recalled Afrāsiyāb to his side and took counsel with him how to put down this "chief of mischief-makers'. That unscrupulous intriguer deceived his employer, and under the pretence of conciliating Muhammad Beg formed a secret pact with him for murdering Shafi by treachery, because Shafi alone stood between Afrāsiyāb and the Mir Bakhshi-ship. Shafi, an open-hearted unsuspicious soldier, was easily deluded. It was reported by Afrāsiyāb that the rebellious general was ready to wait upon the prince and make a full submission, but before doing so he was asking for a friendly meeting with Shafi in order to

receive personal assurances of his safety during his visit to the imperial camp. This was agreed to by Shafi, against the advice of his friends. Muhammad Beg came up with his army and halted eight miles from the imperial camp in Dig.*

The interview was fixed for the 23rd of September. Muhammad Beg was the first to advance, from his own camp to the place of meeting, some five miles outside Dig. Shafi, on his own part, issued from the fort with a small escort, about four hours before sunset. As he mounted his horse, his turban fell down from his head. Disregarding the omen and the alarmed cries of his attendants, he changed to an elephant's back and continued the journey. On the way his spies reported that, contrary to custom, Hamadāni had arrived in full force. But the plain gallant soldier still pushed on and went up to Muhammad Beg who was seated on an elephant amidst a ring of his chief followers on five or six other elephants.

As Shafi stood up on his mount to give his embrace, Muhammad Beg seized both his hands in his own. Shafi, who was a delicate youth, could not wrest himself free; and while he was thus struggling helplessly Hamadāni's nephew

* *DC. Ibrat.* ii, 64-66. Muna Lal 274-277. G. Ali iii. 177-180. *DY.* i. 91. Parasnis, *Aitihasik Sfuta Lekh,* ii. No. 18. Conspiracy to murder Shafi, signed agreement, see BM. 25,021 *f.* 30.

Ismail Beg, who was seated on another elephant, jumped on to the Mir Bakhshi's mount and plunged his dagger into the victim's bowels. Shafi's relation, Md. Amin Khan, who was seated behind him, grappled with the assassin and the two rolled down to the ground. But a servant of Muhammad Beg now finished the business of Shafi with his dagger. Md. Amin was killed, and so also was Dāud Beg Kurchi, another devoted follower of the Mir Bakhshi, who had offered fight. The main army of Hamadāni now rapidly arrived on the scene. The two sides exchanged fire for a short time, and then the outnumbered and leaderless imperialists broke and fled. Afrāsiyāb, who had arrived last, was the first in the retreat. Thus perished, in the prime of youth, Mirzā Muhammad Shafi, the last fighting army chief of the empire, a victim of the blackest treachery. The situation created by this crime is thus aptly described by the Maratha envoy, "Muhammad Shafi is dead. All Hindustan is lying bare. No sword for fighting is left in India." [*DY*. i. 91.]

§ 14. *Afraisiyab Khan appointed Mir Bakhshi again, Oct. 1783.*

The news of the murder of Mirzā Md. Shafi reached Delhi in forty hours, early in the morning of 25th September. Afrāsiyāb Khan's complicity in the crime was suspected but could not be proved. Moreover, there was no other

great noble in sight worthy of filling the deceased army chief's place. Above all, Shah Alam and Abdul Ahad trembled in fear lest Major Browne, the English agent in Shafi's camp, should form a collusion with Afrāsiyāb and crown Sulaimān Shukoh as his puppet with the promise of English armed support. Not a moment was therefore to be lost in securing Afrāsiyāb through his constant friend Abdul Ahad. Mirzā Najaf's old diwan Rajah Manirām and his loyal adherent Md. Quli Khan sent to the Emperor an offer of three lakhs of Rupees if he gave Shafi's posts to his brother Zain-ul-abidin. But the danger from Afrāsiyāb's defection was supreme, and he was immediately appointed Mir Bakhshi and commanded to come back to the Court with the prince as soon as he could manage to do so. [*DY.* i. 92, 94.]

This second regency of Afrāsiyāb Khan lasted for barely 13 months and was closed by an exactly weighed out measure of retribution falling upon him on 2nd November 1784. Nothing remarkable occurred during this interval and the affairs of the central Government drifted on in still greater confusion and weakness under his effete rule, while the star of Māhādji Sindhia rose steadily in the Indian firmament, till at the close of the year 1784 he became the foremost potentate in Northern India in the eyes of all.

After Shafi had been slain, Afrāsiyāb Khan brought back the dead chieftain's disheartened

troops to their camp and made a demonstration of grief with vows of vengeance on the murderer in the presence of Begam Khadija Sultan. Having thus cleared his character, he induced Hamadāni by a secret pact to go back quietly to his jagir of Dholpur-Bāri, paying him some money and confirming him in his possessions as well as his right to the entire tribute payable by Jaipur, and also promising to secure for him the Emperor's pardon in good time.* [*DY.* i. 93.]

Afrāsiyāb's first task after gaining the regency was to take over the administration of Agra from Shafi's agents and to suppress the rebels in that region. So, he marched from Dig to Agra, taking the Begam and all the camp and property of Shafi with him. At Sikandra he formally welcomed (on 18th October) the imperial letter of appointment and robe of office despatched to him from Delhi. His own servants were posted in Dig, Agra, and other places, so long held by Shafi's men. This work took time, and it was the 14th of December before he could reach Delhi with the prince. At the imperial Court the day of Afrāsiyāb's exaltation was also the day of exaltation of his patron Abdul Ahad. This senile old Kashmiri favourite was now (10th November) given the titles of Sharf-ud-daulah,

* *DC.* G. Ali iii. 208-211. *Ibrat.* ii. 67-79. Afrasiyab's doings and the Court occurrences from 28 Oct. to 20 Nov. in BM. Or. 25,021, *f.* 39-88 (news-letters.)

Umdat-ul-mulk, Madār-ul-mulk, Abdul Majid Khan Bahādur, Fath Jang (in addition to his former ones of Majd-ud-daulah, Bahrām Jang), with the *mansab* of 9,000 *zāt* 9,000 troopers *do-āspa seh-āspa*; and if we add his two *barāwardi* the total held by him was raised to 24,000 *zāt*! He took vengeance on Najaf Khan's house by imprisoning that chief's devoted servants Rajah Maniram and Mahdi Quli Khan (14 Nov.) and attaching their property.

§ 15. *Sikh raid into the Doab. Afrāsiyāb marches there (Dec. 1783) and conciliates Mirzā Zain-ul-abidin and Zābita.*

Meantime, a Sikh invasion in unusually large numbers had burst into the upper Doab.* "Owing to the famine, many petty Sikh sardars of the region round Pātiāla, numbering 30 to 35 thousand horse and foot, with their wives and children, crosssed the Jamuna at Buriyā ghāt and entered the Doab for filling their stomachs. They looted the villages round Saharanpur and other cities and penetrated to Deoband.

"From this side Bhāg Singh, Bhagel Singh and other [loyal] Sikhs who enjoyed *rākhi* from the Doab, with Zābita Khan's force, two paltans and Nāhar Singh Gujar's contingent, united and marched towards Ghausgarh. But in an ensuing

* *DC.* G. Ali, iii. 182-185. *Ibrat.* ii. 68-69. *DY.* i. 96, 98, 124.

battle Zābita was defeated and driven back, and the raiders pushed on towards Mirat." [*DY.* i. 96.] They found a new ally in Zain-ul-abidin Khan, whose anger at the murder of his brother had been aggravated by Abdul Ahad's vindictive transfer of Zain's jagirs in the Mirat district to his own son-in-law Qutbuddin.

For repelling this invasion and also suppressing the local rebels who had risen during the recent anarchy, Afrāsiyāb was sent to the Doab within a week of his arrival at Delhi. Prince Sulaimān Shukoh and Najaf Quli Khan (created second Bakhshi on 5th Nov.) accompanied him. Four battalions of sepoys, a thousand Mughalia horse, and a thousand Sikh auxiliaries were added to the new Amir-ul-umara's force. They marched up to the village of Mud-barāl, 8 miles from Mirat, crushing or dispersing the rebels on their way. Zain came up from Bāghpat, intending to offer battle ; but Afrāsiyāb conciliated him and induced him to visit him and Begam Khadija, under protection of the troops of the neutral Begam Samru (23rd December). Zain was next presented to the prince and the three generals vowed to act in concert in the Emperor's service. Zain's demand for the restoration of the eleven mahals in Mirat was left to the Emperor's decision. For some weeks after this the now reconciled generals halted at the Suraj Kund in Mirat town. Here Afrāsiyāb called up Zābita Khan (15th January 1784), presented him to the prince, and

made an understanding with him to hold the upper Doab against the Sikhs. Then they returned to Delhi on 28th January. [*DY*. i. 98, 124.]

§ 16. *Major James Browne in Delhi; failure of his plans.*

A violent quarrel immediately broke out between the Emperor (tutored by Ahad) and his commander-in-chief. Afrāsiyāb was quite unable to pay the large fee he had promised for the succession to Muhammad Shafi, nor could he supply the monthly expenses of the Emperor's family and household (over one lakh a month). He complained that he had not been given charge of the revenue collection of all the Crownlands which his predecessor Najaf Khan had held. The Emperor insisted on keeping these in his own hands lest he should be starved. When Afrāsiyāb proposed to raise funds by taking the Emperor on a tribute-collecting expedition against the Rajah of Jaipur, the project failed for want of the money necessary for equipping it. Thus, things kept moving in a vicious circle. The tension was increased by Afrāsiyāb's fear that as soon as he would leave the capital on a distant campaign, without taking the Emperor or a prince with him as his hostage, Abdul Ahad would bring an English force from Oudh into Delhi as the Emperor's protectors and kick away Afrāsiyāb. Abdul Ahad had long held friendly corres-

pondence with Warren Hastings, and at this time that Governor-General's special envoy, Major Browne, was in Delhi* intriguing hard against the pro-Maratha party at Court and forming a coalition of nobles in favour of an English alliance. However, the Kashmiri was too weak to take sides openly against Afrāsiyāb, and the anti-English policy triumphed.

Browne had personally settled a peace between Shafi and Ranjit Singh, by which the Jat Rajah was to pay Rs. 90,000 and the Mughal general was to restore the district of Bayānā forming the jagir of prince Randhir Singh. This money had been deposited with Browne, who had brought it to Delhi for payment. But Afrāsiyāb refused to confirm the terms and demanded more money. Browne's prestige being thus lowered in public and his ally Abdul Ahad proving a broken reed, he handed this money back to Lal Singh the Bharatpur *bakhshi.*

§ 17. *Prince Jawan Bakht escapes from Delhi, April 1784.*

The Coronation anniversary over (23rd March 1784), Afrāsiyāb urged the Emperor to proceed with him to Agra and help in collecting tribute. But the necessary transport could not

* *DC. Ibrat.* ii. 67-68, 77, 80 (best and fullest.) G. Ali, iii. 186. Hastings's instructions to Browne about his mission (Forrest, Calcutta ed. iii. 1025-'28), review of his policy towards Delhi, (iii. 1087-'90.) *DY.* i. 104.

be got ready for want of money and the depletion of the imperial stores since Najaf's death. Afrāsiyāb ascribed this delay to Abdul Ahad's secret obstruction, and he created a scene at Court, abusing the Emperor and the princes and stinting them in their allowances. Weary of his gilded chains, the heir to the throne, Prince Jahāndār Shāh (Jawān Bakht)* slipped out of the Delhi palace in the midst of a violent dust storm on a dark night (14th April) and reached Lucknow (6th May), where he was welcomed by the Wazir and Warren Hastings. Afrāsiyāb and the Emperor in mortal fear of the possible consequences of this political move, wrote to the prince to come back at once and sent Major Browne (3rd May) to Lucknow with letters to all the three to the same effect.

We may conclude this episode by saying that no benefit resulted to the prince from this meaningless step; he soon alienated his host by his lofty and sneering tone, the English failed to secure an independent appanage for him through Sindhia, and he ended his days as a British pensioner at Benares. In fact, the prince's flight was too late. Warren Hastings had now definitely

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* *DC. Ibrat.* ii. 70-76. Muna Lal 281-285. G. Ali iii. 205-207. Forrest, *Selections from the State Papers of W.H.* (London), ii. 98-118 (the Prince's own narrative, printed as appendix to W. H.'s *Memoirs Relative to the State of India.*) Forrest, *Selections Foreign D.* (Calcutta, iii. 1120-'4.

decided to give up his plan of establishing British control over the Delhi Court, and realised the futility of such an attempt, though he had considered it as very promising and profitable two years earlier, when with such a pawn as Jawān Bakht in his hands he might have imitated Clive's feat of 1765.

The faithless Abdul Ahad continued to ply his sole weapon of underground intrigue by setting Afrāsiyāb's subordinates against him. Zain-ul-abidin, who was eager to avenge his brother's murder, sent five of his men to despatch Afrāsiyāb. They hid themselves in the Mir Bakhshi's office room (*c.* 10 April), but were detected and arrested. Afrāsiyāb believed that this plot had been inspired by Abdul Ahad. There was now an open breach between the two, and on 30th May Afrāsiyāb arrested Ahad,* attached all his property, and later sent him into captivity in Aligarh fort. The Emperor was powerless to save his friend, and henceforth became a mere tool in Afrāsiyāb's hands, without a friend or independent counsellor at Court. Another result of this stroke was that Warren Hastings finally gave up his plan of setting up

* Ahad's confinement.—BM. Or. 25,021, f. 133. *DC. Ibrat.* ii. 79. Royal journey.—BM. f. 99-192 (news-letters, 23 May-27 June.) *DC.*

This attempt on Afrasiyab's life was reported by Major Browne on 13 April. Therefore *Ibrat.*, ii. 78, is wrong in dating it 12 May.

an English party in the Delhi Government, as he had no subservient great noble left there to serve his end.

Thus purging the royal council of his last rival there and leaving his ally Najaf Quli Khan as governor of Delhi, Afrāsiyāb hustled the sickly Emperor out of his capital at the height of the hot weather (26th June) and took him to Agra, where he arrived on 6th August.

§ 18. *Afrasiyab goes to Agra with Emperor, for crushing Hamadani.*

The new commander-in-chief's aim was to crush Muhammad Beg Hamadāni who had made himself independent in the Dholpur region and was obstructing revenue collection in the Agra province.* Gosāin Himmat Bahadur, who had been Shafi's envoy with Māhādji Sindhia, was now Afrāsiyāb's chief counsellor, and kept urging his new patron to bring Sindhia to the Delhi Court and thereby effectually check all his Mughal rivals and the English intriguers. Afrāsiyāb felt that alone he could not cope with Md. Beg, a born soldier. For some months past letters had been going in the Emperor's name and in that of his Mir Bakhshi begging Māhādji to come to

* *DC*. Muna Lal, 286-288. G. Ali, iii. 209-211. *Ibrat*. ii. 81-83. BM. 25,021, *f*. 34 *a* (Mahadji's letter to Emp., dated *c*. 9 July 1784, saying he was coming with his army to serve him.) Afrasiyab had promised Hamadāni the Jaipur tribute and 3 lakhs of new jagir. (BM. 25,021 *f*. 30.)

Delhi, deliver his sovereign and restore the imperial administration to its former glory by undertaking the regency. Sindhia's hands were now free: he had crushed his persistent rival in North Malwa, Rānā Chhatra Singh of Gohad, by storming Gwalior fort (31 July 1783) and seizing Gohad and the Rana's person (25 Feb. 1784.) On hearing of the Emperor's projected journey to Agra, he promised to meet him immediately on his arrival at that city and settle the terms by a personal discussion. But this meeting was delayed by more than three months for reasons which we shall now relate.

Afrāsiyāb Khan, when making his pact with Md. Beg for clearing Shafi out of the way, had given him a written promise to confirm him in all his possessions and authority. Now that Afrāsiyāb had marched against him with the Emperor in his leading strings, Hamadāni boiled with indignation against the faithless man. He levied fresh troops and looted the imperial dominions in his neighbourhood with the ruthless brutality habitual to the mercenary Mughalias, rendering village after village a "lampless desolation." He stormed (10 June) the rich and populous city of Kāmā, where the Rajah's officers had risen against the oppression of his tribute-collectors; "many of the people were slain, others had their noses and ears cut off, and no kind of atrocity was left unpractised by Hamadāni." [*Ibrat.* ii. 82.] He refused to present himself before his sovereign on

his arrival at Agra, and even attacked Zulfiqār Khan, the loyal lord of Alinagar. Afrāsiyāb Khan, unable to cope with the rebel himself, besought the irresistible Māhādji Sindhia to conquer Hamadāni's jagir of Dholpur-Bāri.

Mahadji* had first proposed to leave Gwalior for the imperial camp on 2nd August. But his actual start was delayed till the 26th by the incessant rainfall from the 5th to the 19th of that month. He had only reached the first stage, seven *kos* from Gwalior, when he was brought to a standstill by the rain ; his camp was flooded, two of his elephants and several horses and transport animals died, and his soldiers fell sick. His astrologers urged him to go back as he had stepped out on this journey under unlucky stars. Above all, his wife Gangā Bāi, left behind at Gwalior, reported the nearness of her confinement, and his whole family was expecting a son and heir for whose coming priests had been engaged to placate every god of heaven and spirit of the nether world. So, he returned to Gwalior, *c.* 5th September. Meantime he had sent his lieutenant Ambaji Inglé with his vanguard to wait on the Emperor, and this officer was received in audience on 1st September. Ambaji's report about the rough temper of

* *DC. Ibrat.* ii. 83-85 &c. Muna Lal 289. G. Ali iii. 208-209, 211. *Mahes Darbar,* ii. 74-79. Gw. v. 27. *Chandra* ii. 55. Forrest, Cal. iii. 1127. Atrocities at Kama, BM. 25021, *f.* 174 *b. Aiti Tipanen,* v. p. 11.

Afrāsiyāb and the interminable quarrels among his followers, cooled Mahadji's eagerness to go to the Court.

§ 19. *Afrāsiyāb meets Māhādji Sindhiā at Rupbās.*

However, he resumed his march after the Dasaharā (24th Sep.) and crossed the swollen Chambal river with some difficulty and delay. The fort of Dholpur, then held for Muhammad Beg, quickly capitulated to his incomparably superior force, and he moved about taking possession of the districts of Dholpur and Bāri, driving away Hamadāni's collectors by the terror of his might and appointing his own agents everywhere. These two districts were fertile and had a standard revenue of five or six lakhs of Rupees. Afrāsiyāb had hoped that Sindhia would be content to act as his cat's paw, wrest these districts from Hamadāni and then hand them over to him. But when the Maratha chief refused to disgorge his gains, a rupture between the two seemed imminent. Sindhia rightly argued that as he had come there at the Emperor's call, the regent must pay the salary of his vast force ; but Himmat Bahadur, who was the Delhi Government's agent at his Court, frankly told him that Afrāsiyāb had no money and his own troops were being ruined by his insolvency. These districts were the only assets that Mahadji could lay his hands on. A truce was, however, patched

up by the Gosain, and Sindhia agreed to release the districts. He then advanced to Rupbās, nine miles south-west of Fathpur-Sikri, which had been selected as his halting place (22nd October), and there waited for his ally to come and mature the pact.

Before this, Afrāsiyāb Khan taking with himself all his own troops and guns as well as the advanced division of Sindhia's forces (6,000 horse) under Ambaji Inglé, and leaving the Emperor and Major Browne in Agra, had set out westwards (on 23rd September) to fight Muhammad Beg and effect a junction with Sindhia. He at first talked of attacking his enemy's camp by surprise (on 17th Oct.), but was dissuaded by Ambaji, who wisely advised him to wait till his junction with Sindhia should give him an assurance of victory, as his disorderly troopers and treacherous Mughalias were no match for Hamadani's veterans. So, Afrāsiyāb halted near Khanua (eight miles south-west of Fathpur-Sikri), waiting for Sindhia's approach.

Meantime, Muhammad Beg Hamadani had been engaged in fighting the petty chiefs all along the eastern border of the Jaipur and Macheri kingdoms,—Hindaun, Bhasāwar, Bālāheri, Kama and so on. Finding that Mahadji was victoriously pushing on from the south and Afrāsiyāb was advancing from the east, to join their forces near Fathpur, he now called in all his detachments and formed an entrenched camp guarded by artillery

near Sayyidpurā, which is three miles east of Pichunā, at a point nine miles south of Bharatpur and eleven miles west of Fathpur-Sikri. This position enabled him to threaten the two roads from Khanua northwards to Bharatpur and westwards to Wer fort and the Jaipur frontier. He felt a justifiable contempt for Afrāsiyāb and begged Mahadji to stand neutral in this contest, as he was confident of defeating that "slave-child" (*ghulām bācha*) even against five-fold odds, if only unaided by the Marathas. In return, Hamadani offered to give Sindhia Agra fort and all the territory south of it after he had crushed his rival. But Mahadji was after much bigger game and rejected this petty bait; he advanced to Rupbās as promised.

On 23rd October Afrāsiyāb visited Mahadji in his camp at Rupbās, and next day the Maratha chief returned the compliment. On 26th Oct., Afrāsiyāb paid a second visit to Sindhia, who presented to him the English officers in attendance on him,—Lt. James Anderson, Clerk and Stuart. The two principals held a secret discussion for hours together on their future plans. Afrāsiyāb passionately appealed to Sindhia to regulate the crumbling imperial State; he called Mahadji his father and urged him to save him by crushing Hamadāni. At a whisper from the diplomatic Himmat Bahadur, the Mir Bakhshi now promptly gave up those two disputed districts as a present to his new mother, Sindhia's wife! Thus every-

body's face was saved, and Mahadji gladly cemented the alliance. It was agreed that the Marathas would blockade Muhammad Beg's camp, cut off its food supply and starve him into complete submission.*

Already Mahadji's diplomacy had woven a net round Hamadāni. That free-booter had made every neighbour his enemy, and they hastened to help at his overthrow, now that the great Sindhia had come to attack him. Ranjit Singh of Bharatpur had been soliciting Sindhia to restore the fort of Dig to him for a tribute, and he was now doing everything in his power to please Mahadji. Rāni Kishori again came to the great man to supplicate for Suraj Mal's house, as she had done after the fall of Dig in 1776. Jat and Rajput troops invested Hamadāni's camp from the north and west, while Mahadji and Afrāsiyāb decided to advance and complete the ring on the east and south sides. Sindhia's camp and baggage remained with him at Rupbās, but he sent (on 31st October) Rayaji Patil and Jivaji Bakhshi with his advanced division of cavalry across the Utangan to take up a position a little west of Khanua, nearer to Hamadāni's camp. It was agreed that Afrāsiyāb's cavalry and guns would advance from their base at Khanua on 2nd

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* Br. Mus. Or. 25,021, *f.* 26-28 (news-letters). *Ibrat.* ii. *Aiti Tipanen,* v. p. 10. *DC.* Sadashiv Dinkar's letter of *c.* 17 Nov. in *Aiti. Sfuta Lekh,* ii. No. 18.

November, join Rayaji's division and launch the offensive. Extreme scarcity raged in Hamadani's camp; many of his followers left him, several died of starvation, and he prepared for a desperate sortie rather than perish through hunger.

§ 20. *Zain-ul-abidin murders Afrasiyab, 2 Nov. 1784.*

But the fate of Afrāsiyāb Khan was not to be decided by battle*. In the pride of undivided power he had given Mirzā Najaf's family and old servants the greatest provocation imaginable by demanding the hand of that chief's maiden daughter. As she had been betrothed to Shafi shortly before that general's assassination, this proposal from her father's slave was resented as a burning insult by Shafi's brother Zain-ul-abidin Khan. Emboldened by the nearness of the formidable Maratha army, Zain matured his plan of revenge on the insolent upstart more successfully than in his first attempt of April before.

On 1st November, Afrāsiyāb Khan rode out of his camp at Khanua early in the morning with all his troops and captains, reconnoitred

* Murder of Afrasiyab.—*Aiti Sfuta Lekh*, ii. No. 18. B.M. 25,021, *f.* 30. *Ibrat.* ii. 88-89. G. Ali iii. 211-212. Muna Lal, 290. *Chandra D.* ii. 54, Forrest (Cal. ed.) iii. 1129. Browne's letters to G.G., 2 and 3 Nov. (I.R.O.)

Muhammad Beg's position, and returned after selecting the plain near Sayyidpurā (2½ miles west of Khanua) as the site of the decisive battle with his rival. Next day, he rode out to the place, but returned after putting the battle off to the following day. Dropping into Himmat Bahadur's tent on his way back, he dismissed most of his tired followers and himself spent an hour there playing chess and bragging of the victory to come on the morrow. Then he returned to his own tent and sent away his remaining officers, with the exception of Zain and four others who lingered sitting down on the carpet. It was now past 11 o'clock, and Afrāsiyāb, quite at ease, took his coat and turban off and called for his luncheon to be served. A Mughal retainer of Zain who had mingled with the Mir Bakhshi's servants, now handed him a petition, and as he was reading it the man stabbed him with a dagger from his shoulder down to his breast. The wounded general started up from his seat "like a half-slaughtered fowl", tottered a few steps and then fell down senseless. The assassin was cut to pieces by the servants. In the confusion following the first blow, Zain-ul-abidin rushed out of the tent and mounting a fleet horse galloped to Māhādji's camp where he reported that some one had killed Afrāsiyāb and that he had come there for safety lest he should be killed in suspicion for the crime. (2nd Nov.)

§ 21. *Mahadji Sindhia takes action after the death of Afrasiyab.*

Afrāsiyāb Khan was struck down by the hand of his assassin about 11 o'clock in the forenoon and died shortly after midday, though the fact of his death was kept concealed by his servants and false reports were issued that he was alive or even reviving. But the truth at last became known in the evening. A clamour and tumult broke out in his camp at Khanua. His soldiers rose against his financial manager Rajah Nārāyandās, lest they should lose their heavy arrears of pay with the death of their employer. The Kashmiri slipped away to the contingent of Gosain Himmat Bahadur for safety. Utter terror reigned among the leaderless officers and men of the fallen Mir Bakhshi; an immediate attack by the ruthless Hamadāni in their present distracted condition was expected by every one. But they were saved from such a fate by a strong man of action taking prompt control of the situation.

Mahadji Sindhia had not yet risen from his late sleep when Zain-ul-abidin came panting into his office-tent at Rupbas after a hard ride of five miles, and sought asylum as an innocent man in fear of a false accusation of murder. Sindhia, on hearing the news, refused to admit him to his presence and at once sent him to Mirzā Ghiyās-ud-din's tent to be kept under guard till he should be cleared by a full investigation. The Maratha chief had no certain information about Afrāsiyāb's

Muhammad Beg's position, and returned after selecting the plain near Sayyidpurā (2½ miles west of Khanua) as the site of the decisive battle with his rival. Next day, he rode out to the place, but returned after putting the battle off to the following day. Dropping into Himmat Bahadur's tent on his way back, he dismissed most of his tired followers and himself spent an hour there playing chess and bragging of the victory to come on the morrow. Then he returned to his own tent and sent away his remaining officers, with the exception of Zain and four others who lingered sitting down on the carpet. It was now past 11 o'clock, and Afrāsiyāb, quite at ease, took his coat and turban off and called for his luncheon to be served. A Mughal retainer of Zain who had mingled with the Mir Bakhshi's servants, now handed him a petition, and as he was reading it the man stabbed him with a dagger from his shoulder down to his breast. The wounded general started up from his seat "like a half-slaughtered fowl", tottered a few steps and then fell down senseless. The assassin was cut to pieces by the servants. In the confusion following the first blow, Zain-ul-abidin rushed out of the tent and mounting a fleet horse galloped to Māhādji's camp where he reported that some one had killed Afrāsiyāb and that he had come there for safety lest he should be killed in suspicion for the crime. (2nd Nov.)

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condition and he held no position in the hierarchy of imperial officers. For two hours after his spies kept bringing in conflicting reports about Afrāsiyāb's being dead or his having recovered consciousness. To learn the truth, Mahadji left his tent at 3 p.m. with a select body of his counsellors and captains, and rode towards the Delhi camp. On the way lay the tents of Himmat Bahadur, and here Narayandas came to him and "whispered into his ears the glad tidings of Afrāsiyāb Khan being really dead." Mahadji dismounted, held a secret talk with Himmat Bahadur, and returned to his base at Rupbās.*

Early at night he took deep counsel with his own people. The situation caused by the sudden removal of the imperial regent was no less dangerous to him than to Afrāsiyāb's men. Hamadāni might make a pact with the latter for sharing the vacant Delhi State and the two Musalman forces together might make a treacherous attack upon the Hindu interloper. Sindhia's Court had the lowest opinion of the Mughalia and Hindustani Muslims and their Kashmiri underlings, as the most heartless and selfish deceivers in the world. If such men found

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* Sindhia's acts, 2-10 Nov.—BM. Or. 25,021 *ff.* 31-36 and *Aiti Sfuta L.* ii. No. 18 (best.) *Ibrat.* ii. 88-89. *DY.* i. 117. Nothing in G. Ali or Muna Lal.

time to consolidate their power, they would certainly pack Mahadji off without the least scruple and defraud him of the subsidy and lands promised for the vast force that he had so long employed at their call. All the Maratha ministers urged Mahadji to lose no time in bringing the situation under control by asserting his own authority and awe over every one on the spot. The quaking imperialists piteously cried to him to save them from Hamadani's impending attack. So, Mahadji sent 2,000 cavalry under Ambaji Inglé to stand on guard round the imperial camp that night.

Then he wrote to his advanced division (under Rayaji Patil and Jivaji Bakhshi) to advance a mile or two nearer to Hamadani's camp and interpose between it and the Delhi force at Khanua, so as to intercept any attack by that rebel. The post west of Khanua vacated by these two Maratha generals was occupied next morning (3rd Nov.) by Mahadji himself, who marched there with a strong force, leaving his camp and baggage behind at Rupbās for the present. Thus a defensive wall was erected along the nearer side of Hamadāni's position. This measure also prevented the looting of Afrasiyab's tents and property by his own soldiery and closed the path of any treacherous intrigue between them and Hamadāni.

§ 22. *Sindhia crushes Md. Beg Hamadāni, c. 10 Nov. 1784.*

Meantime, Hamadāni had stationed his envoy Lachhmi Ram in Sindhia's camp for interceding with him to make a peace. The night after the murder, Mahadji sent the envoy back to his master, demanding the surrender of all his artillery, elephants, horses and camels, after which he would be left free to go away anywhere with his family. In case of refusal, war was threatened: "I shall (said Sindhia) ride out and in one *ghari* finish his business." On the 3rd, after Sindhia had advanced to the west of Khanua, the envoy brought to him Hamadāni's answer, "I have 15 guns belonging to the Emperor with me. These I am prepared to surrender, but I will not give up the rest. After my death any one can take them." Nothing was, therefore, left to Sindhia but to fight.

The soldiers of Afrāsiyāb were in open mutiny in fear of losing their arrears of pay. They stopped the bier of the Mir Bakhshi when about to be sent to Fathpur Sikri for burial. But Sindhia pacified them by taking on himself the satisfaction of their claims. They next demanded that they should continue in the service of the State and enjoy their present jagirs. This also Sindhia promised to recommend to the Emperor. Then he distributed some money of his own to relieve the pressing needs of the contingents of Himmat Bahadur and Nārāyandās, and thus

brought these two forces and their artillery over to his side. It was urgently necessary to crush Hamadani without delay. That general was busy with intrigues for seducing Afrāsiyāb's officers, telling them "Afrāsiyāb is dead. Patil Bābā will now manage the empire and the Emperor's State will pass into Hindu hands. Your master is dead. For whom will you remain there now? Come over to me and I shall pay you." A plan was also formed for cutting Zain-ul-abidin out of Sindhia's camp, giving him the Mir Bakhshi's post in name, and the actual government of the empire to Hamadani and the Kashmiri managers of Afrāsiyāb, and driving Sindhia away!

Mahadji acted promptly, but with admirable vigilance tact and suppleness. Three days having been wasted in futile negotiations, he called up all his camp and baggage from Rupbās to his present advanced position (6th and 7th Nov.) and completed the cordon round Hamadani with the aid of the Macheri and Jaipur contingents which had joined him, as well as the imperial troops recently taken over into his pay. He thus secured a crushing superiority in artillery fire. His own base was at Aghapur, 5 miles south of Bharatpur, while Hamadani was as before near Sayyidpurā, some six miles further south. The cannonade was opened on 7th November under Mahadji's personal direction, as he stood in the village of Bārga, a mile south of Sayyidpurā. It was resumed next day (the 8th) with full vigour and

heavy loss on both sides. Muhammad Beg Hamadāni fought grimly, having "girt up his loins for death." But his condition was hopeless. The strict blockade had caused a famine in his camp; his Ruhelas had eaten up all their sheep goats and draught bullocks and now began to come over to Sindhia in parties as they found a way out. His Telingas, abandoning their arms, went away rather than starve or be butchered helplessly.

Then, at last, Muhammad Beg offered the complete submission on which the exasperated Sindhia was insisting. On 10th November, he rode out with a small band of horsemen to Ambaji Ingle's camp and surrendered. All the guns (forty-six in number) and other property found in his camp were attached and removed to the Maratha lines. His vanquished battalions were deprived of their flintlocks. His Ruhela mercenaries, after detention for two days, were sent away under a strong guard to beyond Dig, and there released, with orders not to go towards Agra. In the Maratha camp, Muhammad Beg and his officers were at first guarded as prisoners; but finally he was set free on conditions that made him powerless for mischief, namely, (1) to surrender all his arms and military equipment, (2) to send his family to Ujjain to be held in Sindhia's capital as hostages for his fidelity, and (3) to serve in future as a servant of Sindhia. His fiefs were taken away.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MAHADJI SINDHIA REGENT OF DELHI

§ 1. *Emperor takes refuge with Mahadji.*

In the desolate plain of Sayyidpurā Mahadji Sindhia gave peace and safety to the helpless imperialists. What was he to do next? Every step had to be taken cautiously and after feeling the ground. The next move lay with the Emperor, and Sindhia was bound to fashion his course in accordance with the royal decision.

The news of Afrasiyab's fatal wound reached the Emperor at Agra at half past four the same afternoon, and his death was reported the next morning. The Sovereign found none who could fill the dead regent's place. Of the four lieutenants left behind by Mirzā Najaf Khan, two were dead, one was in open rebellion, and the last, Najaf Quli, was hopelessly sunk in debauchery at Delhi. The only great noble now surviving was Abdul Ahad Khan, a captive in Aligarh fort, but a man after the Emperor's own heart. Major James Browne, the English envoy with him, like William Kirkpatrick three years later, bore an inveterate hatred to Mahadji Sindhia. He now lost no time in pressing his anti-Maratha policy on the helpless distracted Shah Alam through his Persian secretary,

Sālihuddin (the brother of our valued historian Faqir Khairuddin), and urged him to reinstate Abdul Ahad (a friend of the English) as regent, dismiss the Marathas and govern the realm, as Oudh was being governed, under British protection. The Emperor wrote to the qiladar of Aligarh to send Ahad to his Presence. The order was carried out. The age-worn favourite, on arriving at Agra (5th November), first paid a visit to his old acquaintance Rajah Dayaram, who informed Shujādil Khan, the qiladar of Agra, and that officer at once placed Ahad in confinement again without asking for the Emperor's orders.

Shah Alam was highly offended at this disappointment and public exposure of his own impotence. He announced that he would take refuge with Mahadji Sindhia, as the only loyal subject left to him, and deputed two of his trusted personal attendants to the Maratha camp with robes of honour and letters for Sindhia, who replied (7th) through them advising the Sovereign to come to Fathpur Sikri. Next day the Maratha chief despatched 50 camels, four elephants and other transport for the Emperor's journey from Agra and promised him an escort of 5,000 horse and four battalions of sepoys under Apa Khandé Rao. Leaving Agra on the 10th and passing the next day at Fathpur-Sikri, the Emperor reached Afrāsiyāb's camping ground at Khanuā on the 12th, and found hospitable gifts and articles for his comfort from Mahadji waiting for him there.

The fourteenth of November, being the first of the sacred month of Muharram, was fixed upon as a most auspicious day for Sindhia's presentation to his Sovereign.

Mahādji, from his camp some three miles west of the imperial halting-place, came to the audience, being welcomed in advance by the Emperor's favourite son and destined heir Prince Akbar Shah. The Maratha chief offered a tribute of 101 gold *mohars* and laid his head down on his Sovereign's feet. Shah Alam graciously patted him on the back, raised him up, gave him the royal embrace, and bade him sit down on the carpet face to face with him in consideration of Sindhia's lameness, a relic of Panipat. By oriental custom, this first audience was devoted solely to formalities.

Sindhia undertook the protection of the Emperor. So, Shah Alam on the 15th marched from Khanuā to the Maratha camp. All the Deccani and Hindustani soldiers lined the route for miles to welcome him, by Sindhia's order. After inspecting the troops and witnessing their parade, the Emperor retired to the tented quarters prepared for him between the camps of Mahādji and Ambaji Inglé.

On the 17th Shah Alam held the eagerly awaited secret conference with Sindhia which was to shape the destiny of the Delhi empire for the next two decades. He began by urging Mahadji, "You must undertake the regency of my house

and regulate my empire." Sindhia replied, "How can I administer the realm unless I hold some office in the State?" The Emperor then offered him the Mir Bakhshi-ship with the still higher post of Regent, but Sindhia begged for a few days' delay before giving his answer, as the sacred month of Muharram had commenced (on 14th November) and the first ten days of it (*'ashura*) were devoted to religious observances in honour of the death of the Prophet's grandson.

But Mahadji's hands were forced by the pressure of events. There was no wazir, no commander-in-chief, no vicegerent in that moving capital and centre of an empire's government. The Emperor was present, no doubt; but he was a man who had never led an army or transacted a single piece of business personally since his re-entry into Delhi thirteen years ago. Anarchy under a crowned shadow threatened total dissolution to the heritage of Akbar and Shah Jahan. The soldiers were grumbling for their long-standing arrears of pay and their utter failure to raise loans anywhere for their daily food; their future looked utterly gloomy; there was no lawfully constituted authority, no known commander for enforcing order in that vast assemblage of armed men, estimated at 30,000, even excluding Sindhia's own troops. Disorder might break out any day; and one, attended by murder, did break out on the 15th, when Kush-hāli Rām Haldia, the Jaipur general (*bakhshi*)

and peace-envoy in this camp, was murdered by a Rajput soldier in his tent. The crime was imputed to the Macheri Rajah, whose diwān Haldia had at first been and whom he had next deserted and plundered in concert with Mirza Najaf. The Kachhwa contingent under him dispersed from the imperial camp in confusion like sheep without a shepherd. [Dy. i. 116—120. *HP*. 606. *Ibr*. ii. 92.]

§ 2. *Intrigues against Mahadji Sindhia.*

At the same time the most confused and intricate intrigues were going on for the succession to Afrāsiyāb Khan and the control of the weak Emperor. The dead Mir Bakhshi's diwān Nārāyandās and his ally the unscrupulous Gosāin Himmat Bahadur planned to bribe the Emperor with twelve lakhs of Rupees and thus induce him to create Afrāsiyāb's son, a boy of three, commander-in-chief, and then govern the realm themselves as this infant's guardians and devour the revenues of his jagirs and the Crownlands customarily administered by the Mir Bakhshi! Another widow of Afrāsiyāb, not this boy's passive mother, but an imperious Afghan lady, whose father and uncle then held the key-positions of commandant of Agra fort and chief of the imperial artillery,—sought permission to adopt a son and manage Afrāsiyāb's vast property in the name of her nominee. Major Browne was working desperately to revive Warren Hastings's

abandoned plan of turning the Emperor into an English puppet and governing the empire through some Muslim regent who would be under the dictation of the British Resident at the capital, as the Nawab of Oudh already was. Those two masters of low cunning and underground intrigue which always ends in futility, Nārāyandās and Himmat Bahadur, even imagined that they could get rid of Sindhia by throwing to him a few crumbs of territory and a few thousand Rupees worth of jewellery from Afrāsiyāb's legacy, and thus clear the path of their ambition to rule the realm as Najib-ud-daulah or Mirzā Najaf had done before! They even tried to buy Sindhia's ministers over to these views.

All this reached Mahādji's ears and he took his measures with marvellous patience, secrecy and exactness in timing his blows. He first crushed Muhammad Beg Hamadāni and removed that source of danger and distraction from his neighbourhood (*c.* 10 Nov.) Then, when the Emperor removed to the circuit of the Maratha camp (15 Nov.), he took over the control of the Emperor's and Afrāsiyāb's camps by posting his own disciplined battalions around them. "Without his permit none can go from one camp to the other, none can visit the Emperor, none can leave the Emperor's camp." [*DY*. i. 120, 117.] The Mughalia sardars, lately under Hamadāni, were similarly isolated by Maratha guards.

Sindhia held many private conferences with the Emperor, some on the problems facing that helmless Government, some on the persistent English request to recall the fugitive Prince Jawan Bakht to Delhi at the head of five trained sepoy battalions and give him a vast appanage. Above all, there was the urgent question of finding the large sums necessary for maintaining the Emperor's household and regularly paying the enormous army assembled in his name. [*HP*. 369. *Ibr*. ii. 99, *PRC*. i. 7.]

§ 3. *Mahadji Sindhia is created Commander-in-chief and Supreme Regent of the Empire. The difficulties of his position.*

The money so badly needed could come only if pressure was put on the richest vassal of the State, the long-defaulting Rajah of Jaipur. So, on 30th November Sindhia with the Emperor and all the assembled troops, as well as the English envoys Anderson and Browne and their staff, made one march of ten miles from Sayyidpurā westwards to Pingora. Here, on the 1st of December, the Emperor at a public darbar appointed the Peshwa as his Deputy (*Nāib-i-Munāib*) as well as Commander-in-chief (*Bakhshi-ul-mamālik*), subject to the written condition that Mahadji Sindhia and none else should be the permanent agent of the Peshwa in discharging the actual functions of these exalted offices. The *khilats* and many kinds of rich presents bestowed

by the Emperor on the Peshwa as the adjuncts of his new office, as well as complimentary robes for the Peshwa's regent Nānā Fadnis, were made over to Sindhia for despatch to Poona.

On the 3rd of the month another march of ten miles was made to Halena, a place five miles north of Wer fort. Here next day another darbar was held at which Shah Alam conferred on Mahadji Sindhia the highest possible post in the imperial Government, namely that of Regent Plenipotentiary (*Wakil-i-mutlaq*) direct from himself, without any reference to the Peshwa. This post was so rarely filled that only three previous instances of it are known in the long annals of the Timurids, once under Akbar, once under Shah Jahan and the last time under Bahadur Shah I. As Mahadji returned to his tent after being appointed dictator of the Delhi Empire, his troops lined the entire route and fired salutes, while all the officers presented *nazars* in his tent. Thus at one stroke all the machinations of the great Maratha's puny rivals were reduced to nullity. [*Dy*. i. 133, 106. *HP*. 342, 343. *PRC*. i. 9. *Ibr*. ii. 95.]

Halena belonged to Lakhidhar Singh, a vassal of Jaipur. Its fortalice was stormed in three days. Before this, Ranjit Singh Jat and Pratāp Singh Narukā had settled their tributes with the new imperial Regent and taken leave for their homes. On the 11th of December, Mahadji advanced to Mahewā (22 miles due east of

Bandikui railway junction) and the fort of Rāmgarh lying two miles to its west. This fort held out for a week, and then the garrison capitulated (18th Dec.) Envoys now came from Jaipur with proposals of tribute which were accepted, and the Emperor, led by Sindhia, moved (*c.* 28 Dec.) towards Dig, where his camp was pitched outside the fort on 3rd January, 1785. Here a two months' halt was enforced by the pressing and complicated questions of State which could no longer be left unattended to.

Mahadji Sindhia was now Regent of the Empire and Captain General of the Forces, but what he had obtained was only two sheets of paper signed by a titular Sovereign. He did not yet hold a single inch of the imperial domains beyond the ground his camp stood on. The two royal seats of Delhi and Agra were occupied by his dead predecessor's men. The royal treasuries and even the revenue records were in their possession. If Mahadji was to be the Emperor's deputy in anything more than the name, he must get possession of the royal forts, the official treasures and the land still subject to the Crown. At first he hoped that the mere order of the Sovereign would transfer these adjuncts of the Mir Bakhshi's office to him, as they had been smoothly transferred to Shafi and Afrāsiyāb or to Mirzā Najaf before them. So, he waited for some time ; but at last the bitter truth dawned on his

mind that in the troubled politics of Delhi force alone could win for him what was his due by law.

By the close of the year 1784 he had run into a debt of eighty lakhs in consequence of his campaigning against the English and later in Malwa and Hindustan. His own force of 30,000 men with their powerful artillery was costing him seven lakhs of Rupees a month, and the contigents of Afrāsiyāb and Himmat Bahadur that he had now taken over added about three lakhs to his monthly army bill. The Emperor's maintenance burdened his keeper with an expenditure of one lakh and thirty thousand Rupees every month. The Regent must find this money regularly or his new dignity would vanish like smoke. As Wakil-i-mutlaq and Mir Bakhshi, Sindhia was officially entitled to occupy all the royal forts, to receive payment of the fixed tributes from the vassal princes, and to take over the revenue collection of the Crownlands. The custodians of the royal treasuries and stores also were bound to account to him for what they held on behalf of the State.

§ 4. *Mahadji Sindhia gains Dig and Agra forts, Jan.—March, 1785.*

The wealth accumulated in their days of power by Abdul Ahad, Mirzā Najaf, Latāfat Ali and Md. Shafi had all passed by successive forcible appropriations into the hands of Afrāsiyāb Khan,

the last of the Mir Bakhshis. These had been lodged in the fort of Aligarh, the stronghold of the personal jagir of the last-named chief. Rumour swelled their value to a kror and a half, though what Sindhia afterwards actually realised proved to be only forty-thousand Rupees. [*HP*. 446.] Afrāsiyāb Khan had three wives; the first of whom had borne him a son named Khādim Husain Khān, now three years old, whom the family diwān Narayandas was plotting to get appointed as Mir Bakhshi under the nominal guardianship of his mother, so that he himself might rule the realm as her agent. But this widow had neither any wealth in her hands, nor the spirit of ruling. The second wife was an imperious Afghan lady, who controlled all the forts, treasures and other property of the late Mir Bakhshi and was strong in the strength and position of her father Shujā-dil Khan (the custodian of Agra fort) and his two cousins Bayazid (the Chief of the imperial artillery) and Mihrbān Khan. This dowager's ambition was to set Khādim Husain aside, adopt another boy, and herself rule the family estates in his name. All the wealth of Afrasiyāb Khan was stored in Aligarh, which this lady held in conjunction with her husband's brother Jahāngir Khan. [*HP*. 363, 373.]

Afrāsiyāb Khan had placed the fort of Dig and the lands appertaining to it in charge of Malik Muhammad Khan. Sindhia, carrying the

Emperor with himself, arrived near the place and called upon this man through Narayandas to relinquish the fort and lands in exchange for a jagir elsewhere. The garrison (mere *sebandi* troops) on being paid their arrears (Rs. 15,000) by Mahadji, evacuated the fort on 16th January, and he occupied it by his own troops under Devji Patil [Anderson's letter. DY. i. 127. *Ibr.* ii. 96.] But he had to stop for two months at Dig because of the contumacy of Shujā-dil Khan who held Agra fort. This man refused to admit Rāyāji Patil who had arrived with a royal letter appointing him *qiladar* of it. Fighting ensued. Rayaji easily drove in the outlying piquets, established his own rule in the *city* and its markets, and opened trenches against the *fort*. His fire demolished the retaining wall of the fosse in many places. Mahadji himself, with the rest of his army and the Emperor, moved up to Rajghat on the Jamunā, about four miles north of Agra (2nd March), and the siege was then brought to a speedy conclusion.

One battalion of sepoys, under Bhawāni Singh, was included in the garrison of the fort. Their salary having been long in arrears, this commandant visited Rayaji and made a pact for coming over with his men if their dues were paid and they were enrolled in the imperial army. Other troops in the fort followed his example. Shujā-dil, deserted by his followers, had no help but to make the best terms he could.

He was promised jagirs worth Rs. 52,000 a year, and vacated the fort on 27th March. Sindhia's flag was unfurled on the second throne-city of the Mughal Emperors. The *subahdari* of Agra province was now (30th March) conferred on Mahadji, as deputy of the nominal viceroy, Prince Akbar Shah.*

§ 5. *Mahadji's attitude towards Afrasiyab's family: their duplicity and hostility.*

The next step was to gain Aligarh fort. In order to be nearer to this place, Sindhia marched up the river to Mathura (arrival 11th April.) At this holy city, and later at Chir-ghat, 20 miles north of it, he was detained for the next eight months by the long-drawn contest for Aligarh. His hope of securing this place smoothly by persuasion was doomed to a still more cruel disappointment than in the case of Agra. He had from the first treated Afrasiyab's widows and orphan with every consideration. Shortly after the murder of the Khan he had publicly declared to Narayandas, "I intend to plant Afrasiyab's son on the *masnad*, persuade the Emperor to take the boy into his favour, collect the subsidy promised to me, and then go back to the Deccan". [Or. 25,021 *f*. 33*a*. *HP*. 606]

This was his design till the middle of November. All his acts showed that he valued

* Capture of Agra fort.—*DC*. *HP*. 354, 359, 365, *DY*. i. 128, 130, *Ibr*. ii. 105. Browne's letter. *PRC*. i. 10-12.

his solid new conquests in Malwa more than the empty dignity of the regency of an insolvent empire. Even when the Emperor threw himself upon Mahadji's neck and entreated him to save the State by undertaking to be its helmsman, the Maratha general hesitated for a full fortnight, till the hopeless disruption around forced his hands and he at last realised that the guidance of such a realm could not be left to an infant of three, with the Kashmiri servants of his household acting vicariously for him. Such a step would complete the downfall of the imperial power and at once bring the English to Delhi as keepers of the Emperor's person and entitle them to exercise the *de facto* suzerainty of the empire of India in his name,—a policy which was then being openly pursued under Mahadji's eyes by Major Browne, the British agent accredited to the Delhi Court. But that was the very danger which the Peshwa had been urging Sindhia in letter after letter for three years past to do his best to avert.

The regency of Delhi was, therefore, forced upon Sindhia, but he manfully shouldered the burden. He had no wish to ill-treat Afrāsiyāb's family if they acted honestly by the State and delivered without concealment or theft the public property in the late Regent's keeping. Immediately after his first conference with the Emperor (on 17th November 1784), he had caused the title of Husain-ud-daulah Khādim Husain Khan

Bahādur Ghālib Jang to be bestowed on Afrāsiyāb's son. Next, from Halena (middle of December) he detached an escort to bring this child to the imperial camp with due care and honour. On his arrival, Mahadji paid a formal visit to his tent to offer condolences for his father's death (18th January 1785.) A little later on the next coronation anniversary (3rd April) the boy was raised by the Emperor at Mahadji's prayer, to the dignity of Ashraf-ud-daulah II (his father's title) and granted fiefs worth four lakhs a year. He expected that the child's guardians would, in return, deal with him in a fair and friendly manner. But they were determined to grasp at everything and cheat the infidel from the South. [*DC. Ibr.* ii. 96.]

§ 6. *Siege of Aligarh. Surrender on 20 Nov. 1785.*

Arrived near Agra, Mahadji called upon Afrāsiyāb's family in Aligarh to surrender that fort with the Government property in it. They outwardly professed readiness to comply and demanded another strong place and a jagir for their support, but secretly prepared for resistance.* The *qiladar* Jahangir Khan (the late Mir Bakhshi's brother) was receiving secret letters of encouragement and promises of aid from the

* Siege of Aligarh.—PRC. i. 12-19. HP. 363, 373, 381, 407, 411, 446. *Ibr.* ii. 105-106, 148. DY. i. 140, 141, 112. DC. G. Ali, iii. 215.

Mughal officers now under Sindhia and even from Himmat Bahadur, which stiffened his back, and he sent frantic appeals for help to the Nawab of Oudh and Sir John Cummings, the general commanding the English brigade at Anupshahar. To the Nawab Wazir he wrote, "If this strong fort on the Oudh frontier is secured by the Deccanis, it would be a standing menace to your dominions, as it would be very easy for them to raid Oudh territory from it. If you help me to keep this fort and the little territory now held by me, I shall give you half of the hoards within it accumulated by Najaf and Shafi, Afrāsiyāb and others during their lifetime. I shall also pay your military expenses. If you wish for it, I shall deliver this fort to the English and live as a mere zamindar of this tract paying you revenue." [*Ibr. DY.* i. 171, 140.]

Sir John Cummings, on his own initiative, marched from his cantonment (1 April) and took post at Atrauli, sixteen miles north-east of Aligarh, to watch the Maratha movements. He even admitted Jahangir Khan to an interview and thus backed him in his defiance of his master's authority. This unexpected and unjustifiable threat of British intervention caused the greatest alarm and perplexity to Sindhia and correspondingly emboldened his enemies on all sides. He protested to his Resident James Anderson, who secured an order from the Governor-General recalling Cummings to his own station. Cummings

withdrew to Karanbās (21st April), and thus one threatening cloud blew over.

Mahadji had at first sent Mirzā Ānwār Beg (the brother of his favourite confidant Mirzā Rahim Beg) to the Doab to see if Aligarh would be peacefully vacated; but this officer's escort, a thousand horse only, was too small even to protect him, and his fears grew tenfold when he heard of the English brigade coming to the aid of Jahangir Khan. So, he did not venture to approach even within 20 miles of that fort (early April 1785.) Meantime Agra had fallen. Sindhia now conciliated Shujā-dil Khān and his cousin Bayazid with costly gifts and sent them to Aligarh to try their influence on their kinsman Jahangir Khan. They returned unsuccessful. Next, the fear of embroilment with the British troops being then over, he detached a force of 5000 horse under Rayaji Patil to attack Aligarh. But by this time the summer was well advanced, there was a great scarcity of water for ten miles round Aligarh. In May a severe epidemic of cholera desolated the country, "men fell down dead while walking on the roads." Worst of all, Sindhia had exhausted his funds and could not discharge the heavy arrear salaries of his army; "no soldier who was not paid his dues would agree to march across the Jamuna on this campaign."

However, Rayaji at last arrived on the scene and opened the siege. Jahangir Khan boldly

assumed the offensive, as the best form of defence; he made repeated sorties and attacked the Marathas. On 20th July he sallied forth from the walled *city* of Koil,—three miles distant from the *fort* of Aligarh,—and fell upon the Maratha army. Rayaji, after a desperate hand to hand fight, in which he lost 400 men in killed and wounded, repulsed the attack and advancing stormed Koil, from which the disheartened garrison fled away, abandoning all of their forty pieces of cannon and other war material. This city now became the besiegers' base and they advanced closer to Aligarh, running trenches towards its walls. The situation in early August is thus described in a Marathi despatch, "The fort is blockaded; our piquets are posted one *kos* off all around it. But it is a strong place and can hold out for a long time." The exceptionally heavy and ceaseless rain of this year's monsoon troubled the besiegers worse than the summer heat had done before. The Jamuna rose in high flood, interrupting the boat traffic between Mahadji's camp and the besieging army. Jahangir Khan continued to make sallies and raid the siege trenches. Sindhia retaliated by confiscating his property and imprisoning his relatives wherever found. [*Ibr.* ii. 148.]

As the siege of Aligarh dragged on into winter and Sindhia's prestige suffered in consequence, he decided to bring the Emperor out of Delhi and try the effect of his personal appearance

before the defiant fort. So, on 12th October, he left Mathura and on 10th November met the Emperor, who had come from Delhi at his entreaty, at Banchari (five miles north of Hodal). On the 17th of that month the two together came to the camp at Chirghat, 20 miles north of Mathura, and there halted for nearly two months.

Jahangir Khan now found resistance useless. He made terms through Lachhman Rao and vacated Aligarh fort, which Sindhia's men occupied on 20th November. The spoils found there included 65 large pieces of artillery, one mortar (for throwing shells), 1,600 maunds of powder and 1,000 maunds of lead, besides a few sacks of grain,—but only Rs. 40,000 in cash and jewels (which sum was divided equally between the Emperor and his regent.)

§ 7. *Punishment of the treacherous partisans of Afrāsiyāb Khan.*

On 28th November, Jahangir Khan came to Mahadji's camp and was presented to the Emperor. The fort of Mursan was assigned to Afrāsiyāb's widows and son with a jagir worth Rs. 1,10,000 per annum. Jahangir Khan was given a jagir of half a lakh, but no fort. The total revenue of the lands now granted to this family was 2½ lakhs. It was a clear condition of the terms granted to him that he "should retain possession of all his private property, but must

give an account of all the property belonging to the late Amir-ul-umara." [Anderson, in *PRC*. i. p. 31.] It was admitted on all hands that the accumulations of four successive regents had gone to form the treasure of Afrāsiyāb and had been deposited by him in Aligarh. But now the victors found only Rs. 40,000 there. Jewels of known description which the Emperor had formerly entrusted to Najaf* and Afrāsiyāb for raising money could not be traced among these. The only answer which Jahangir Khan and the Begams gave was to profess their own ignorance and throw the entire responsibility on the late Mir Bakhshi's diwan Narayandas and lieutenant Shujā-dil Khan. [*Ibr*. ii. 151, *DY*, i. 141.] But it was proved that during the late siege of Aligarh, Jahangir Khan had been constantly smuggling out of the fort all portable valuables to Oudh territory through the trusty old servants of the house,—the maid Annāji, Saif Khan and a Hindu clerk named Bhawāni Prasād.

Sindhia was exasperated by this faithlessness; moreover, failure to recover the Emperor's jewels exposed him to disgrace before his sovereign and the suspicion that he had himself secreted the richer spoils instead of sharing them with the Emperor. This was the very charge made against

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* Anderson in his letter of 19th Dec. imagined that it was a "pretence" on the part of Shah Alam; but the contemporary records of Najaf Khan's regency [Br. Mus. Or. 25, 021, *f*. 204 *b*] prove that it was a fact. *H.P.* 446.

the Marathas after the capture of Pathargarh 13 years earlier. Persuasion having failed, Sindhia on 17th December placed Jahangir Khan in confinement and (on the 25th) brought Afrasiyab Khan's widows under arrest from Mursan to his camp. Their persons and tents were searched by female servants, and some jewels were recovered, (which Sindhia divided with the Emperor.) The captives now delivered to Mahadji the secret letters of Narayandas and Himmat Bahadur urging Jahangir Khan to hold Aligarh and resist Sindhia to the utmost. The late Mir Bakhshi's diwan was therefore imprisoned, his family, living in Agra city, was arrested, and their property attached [*c.* 1 January, 1786. *DC. Ibr.* ii. 151-154.]

§ 8. *Sindhia's first dealings with the Sikhs, 1785.*

At the beginning of 1785, while Sindhia was trying to secure the peaceful possession of Agra, he had to think also of Delhi and its defence. On 19th January he got his lieutenant Ambaji Inglé appointed faujdar of the district north of the capital and collector of customs, and sent him off with a strong force and the Macheri chief to establish the new regent's authority in Delhi and protect it from the Sikhs who were expected to make a swoop upon that kingless city. Najaf Quli Khan, who was governing Delhi for Afrāsiyāb, now gave peaceful possession (11th February), and Ambaji posted his own guards at

the gates. [*DC. DY*. i. 128.] The Gujars had been plundering the environs of the capital during the anarchy following the death of Najaf Khan and they had redoubled their disturbances after the murder of Afrāsiyāb. Ambaji subdued them by his rapid and ruthless blows. Surrounding a party of them in a village near Surajpurā, he slew 200 of the men and dragged the rest to Delhi to be executed by the police in public. Then he blockaded a hill near Kālikā, but most of its Gujar population escaped through the cordon at night. After four or five Gujar villages had been sacked and their male population slaughtered, the predatory tribe took to a more peaceful life.

Then Ambāji marched north on his main mission which was to make a settlement with the Sikhs. He halted at Bakhtāwarpur, 13 miles north of Delhi. Nine Sikh sardars of the Panipat region with whom he had already opened parleys, came and visited him here (27th March).

It was agreed that two of their leaders,—Dulcha Singh and Mohan Singh—should visit Sindhia and confirm the alliance. The terms of Najaf Khan's pact with them were that they would levy their blackmail (*rākhi*) from the villages where it had been customary before, but should not raid any imperial territory. [Ch. 31 § 5.] Mahadji demanded that they should give up levying *rākhi* on any Crownland, but must take possession of the jagirs that he offered them at the expense of the Jaipur Rajah, and that they should

serve with 5,000 horse in the wars of the Empire. [*HP.* 373, 381, *contra DY.* i. 111, 134, 135. Raj. xii. 41.] This arrangement did not touch the Doab, but provided for the safety of the district from Delhi northwards to Panipat. With these two sardars and a light escort Ambaji made a rapid march to Mathura and interviewed his master (on 10th April.) The Sikh chiefs lived in that camp for some time and were given their *congee* about the 10th of June. [*PRC.* i. 14, 15.]

§ 9. *Campaign against the Khichis of Rāghogarh.*

The whole of the year 1785 was a period of anxiety and distraction to Mahadji. As Hingané wrote on 15th October, "Our troops are entangled at four places: Rāmgarh (=Aligarh), Rāghogarh, Jaipur and the Pānipat district." Of these the Raghogarh business had to be immediately attended to for assuring a vital line of communications.

The great road from Agra to the South runs, about 150 miles south of Gwalior, through Sironj, the capital of the Ahir country. Forty miles north west of Sironj is Rāghogarh, where the Emperor Akbar had created a small State for a Khichi Chauhan prince. In the next century this family extended its sway from the Betwā river beyond Sironj in the east, to the Andheri (a tributary of the Pārvati river) in the west, by subduing the numberless petty local chieftains.

With the coming of the Marathas into Malwa in the second quarter of the 18th century began a conflict between them which ended in the Khichis becoming tributaries to the new overlords of that province. The tribute, as usual, fell into arrears, and in 1760 we even find the Khichis rising in the rear of the Maratha army during Sadāshiv Bhāu's march to Pānipat. With the expansion of Maratha rule over Malwa, a shorter route to the Deccan was opened, leaving the royal highway at Shivapuri, 65 miles s.w. of Gwalior, and turning south-westwards to Ujjain and Indore. This road traversed the Khichi country, entering it near the Gunā railway station,—only a few miles south of which is Bajrang-garh, the later capital of Khichi-wada. The Marathas were bound to keep order there.

The Khichi Rajah (who had taken the title of Rānā) had ceded Chhabrā (30 miles west of Gunā) and Gugar in lieu of tribute to Holkar. But in 1784 he demanded the restoration of these lands, promising to pay the tribute in cash. Ahalyā Bāi, the regent of Holkar's State, asked for the full clearance of arrears before relinquishing the two districts. The Rānā then forcibly seized these two towns and some other Maratha posts there (March 1785). On hearing of this, Mahadji Sindhia detached Khandoji Inglé (the brother of Ambāji) and Muhammad Beg Hamadāni from Agra with a strong force against him (April.) They recovered Gugar, Chhabrā and some smaller

places, and reached Raghogarh, where they took the village (*peth*) and laid siege to the fort (early June.) The Rānā Balwant Singh (son of Balbhadra) sent his brother to negotiate with Sindhia directly; but near Mathura this agent was attacked and imprisoned by order of Mahadji (June. *HP*. 407.) Balwant resumed the offensive, defeated some Maratha bodies dispersed for plunder, and forced the invaders to fall back (early July.) The news of these reverses roused Mahadji, who pushed up reinforcements from all sides and raised the invaders' strength to 40,000 men. Balwant then left the open field and shut himself up in Raghogarh (August 1785); the inefficient siege of that fort by the Marathas dragged on for several months. At the end of next winter the Maratha generals, being eager to end the business and go elsewhere and also distracted by their mutual quarrels, clinched their long negotiations with the Rānā and agreed to let him go away from his fort with life and honour (Feb. 1786.) Mahadji was highly incensed on hearing of this poor result of an expedition on which he had spent lakhs of Rupees. He superseded the generals there, and sent Ambāji Inglé with orders to kill or imprison Balwant and confiscate his entire State. This was promptly done. Maratha rule was established in the Khichi country, Balwant was fettered and confined in Gwalior, while his wife and two of his sons were sent as captives to Bhilsā, and all his property confiscated.

The expeditionary force returned to Mahadji's side in April.

This attempt to extinguish a two hundred years old Rajput State produced bitter fruits in the end. Though Balwant Singh was kept in prison, one of his sons Jai Singh remained free, and by carrying on a ceaseless guerilla war in the company of local Robin Hoods and with the secret backing of the Muslim Nawab of Bhopal, he made the Deccan road more unsafe than before and covered Sindhia with humiliation by capturing one of his wives.*

§ 10. *The Gosains Umrao-gir and Himmat Bahadur: their early history.*

By March 1786, Mahadji Sindhia had freed himself from most of the entanglements that had beset him in the first year of his regency ; but just at this time a perpetual thorn was planted on his eastern flank which defied all his efforts to remove it and long continued to embolden his enemies elsewhere. We have met with the Nāgā Gosāin (or Hindu fighting abbot) Rājendra-gir in Safdar Jang's wars with the Bangash (1750) and Imad-ul-mulk (1753.) This monk had adopted as his successors two Brahman boys who had been sold

* Raghogarh campaigns.—*MD.* ii. 94, 98, 101, 105, 114, 139, 124. *DY.* i. 134, 151, 182. *HP.* 412, 407. *Aiti. Tip.* vi. 41. Satara i. 101. *Selections from Asiatic Journal,* pp. 599-600.

to him by their widowed mother during a famine. These were Umrāo-gir and Anup-gir (the latter being entitled Himmat Bahadur.) They continued after his death to command the Nāgā force in the Oudh service. On behalf of Shujā-ud-daulah, Himmat Bahadur waged war against Hindupat, Rajah of Bundelkhand, but was signally defeated (1762.) He also fought on his master's side on the disastrous field of Buxar (1764), which turned Shujā into a landless fugitive. Then the Gosāins sought for their livelihood by joining Jawāhir Singh Jat (Ch. 23 § 16), but faithlessly deserted him for Raghunāth Dādā's side (at the end of Dec. 1766.) Next year, when the Marathas retired from their north Indian enterprises, the Gosāins came back to Shujā, who had been now restored and strengthened by his English alliance and was entering on a career of annexation. But after Shujā's death (1775) his son Asafuddaulah had to reduce his army in order to fill the gaping void of his debt to the English. The Gosains being again turned out of employment, joined Najaf Khan at the siege of Dig (1776) and continued to work under him and his successors till Mahadji's rise to the regency of Delhi. [*Imad.*, 64, 87, 102, 143.]

Himmat Bahadur lacked personal courage and bore a low character for his faithlessness and love of secret intrigue. He had risen very high in Najaf Khan's favour and become that regent's principal adviser and agent in dealing with the

Hindu princes. After Najaf's death, he took Afrāsiyāb's side in the struggle for the regency, and hence during Afrāsiyāb's period of power (Oct. 1783—Oct. 1784), Himmat Bahadur was all in all as the manager of the new regent's policy and foreign relations. Working hand in glove with Nārāyandās, the diwan of Afrāsiyāb's private estates and household, Himmat Bahadur became the real power behind the throne, without holding any office of State. He bore a deadly hostility to Mirzā Md. Shafi and also to Md. Beg Hamadāni, because these two blocked his patron's path, and so he contrived the conspiracy for the murder of Shafi (1783). Thereafter, with the object of suppressing the last remaining rival of Afrāsiyāb, he patiently wove his web and induced Mahadji Sindhia to come to Rupbās in support of the Khan.

Afrāsiyāb's unexpected murder merely forced a change of direction on the Gosāin's selfish plans: he now moved heaven and earth to get Afrāsiyāb's infant son created Mir Bakhshi, hoping thus to rule the Delhi empire himself as the minor's *de facto* guardian and pack Mahadji off to the Deccan by paying a small hire for his help! Sindhia who had the greatest contempt for the character of the entire official class of Delhi, and particularly for the Gosāin,—at first professed with masterly tact and diplomacy, to be entirely guided by Himmat Bahadur, because he

was as yet without any personal knowledge of the men and affairs of the imperial Government and had to rely on some old officer of it. The Gosāin had hoped that even under Sindhia as regent, he would be all in all in the actual administration and in the southern stranger's relations with the Emperor.

But his eyes began to be opened when he was firmly prevented from having pre-audience of the Emperor on the day of Mahadji's first conference with his Sovereign (17 Nov. 1784.) He had fondly hoped to convert the pliant Emperor to his own policy by anticipating Sindhia at his ears. On the contrary, the Emperor privately urged Mahadji to dismiss Himmat Bahādur and his ally Nārāyandās as a pair of rogues. Himmat Bahādur's credit with Sindhia, and therefore his position in Delhi politics, sank lower still when he failed to secure the peaceful surrender of Agra fort by his boasted influence with its commandant. And when he saw himself being more and more ignored by the new regent and place after place coming under Mahadji's control without his assistance, the Gosāin felt that Sindhia had made himself independent of the remnant of the Najaf Khan party. He began to spit venom in his rage and vexation and tried his sole weapon of treachery and intrigue for regaining his ascendancy in the State by spiting Sindhia. He wrote secretly to the qiladar of Aligarh to stiffen his opposition. Last of all, when Afrāsiyāb's

family reported that all the dead Khan's fabled wealth had been in the keeping of Narayandas and Himmat Bahadur and yet no part of it could be recovered from these two agents, their downfall became inevitable. Himmat Bahadur's treasonable letters to Jahangir Khan were discovered among the escheated property of the latter and they proved beyond a doubt what Mahadji had long suspected. [*Ibr.* ii. 153. *DY.* i. 147. *HP.* 365, 408.]

But Sindhia at first shrank from striking at a Brahman. He called upon Himmat Bahadur to give up all the jagirs he held (worth about 20 lakhs a year for the two brothers together) and leave his camp. For one month after this order, Himmat Bahadur whined before Sindhia, pointing out that he had no place to live in. So, in February 1786 he was assigned the Mot taluq (30 m. north-east of Jhānsi) and another jagir at Vrindāvan for his maintenance, but on condition that he must bear the cost of his contingent (Rs. five lakhs annually) and this force must serve under Sindhia's banners, while Himmat himself would live in monastic retreat at Vrindāvan. [*HP.* 351, 432, *DY.* i. 149.]

§ 11. *The two Gosāins rise against Sindhia in the Doab.*

After the arrest of Nārāyandās (*c.* 16 January 1786), Himmat Bahadur grew alarmed about his own safety and gave up attending Sindhia's darbar

lest he should share his late colleague's fate. But Mahadji paid him Rs. 20,000 as his subsistence allowance for two months and bade him remove from the camp at Dig to his estate in Vrindāvan alone, leaving all his troops, horses etc. behind, who would be paid by Sindhia after taking their muster. But the Gosāin would not agree to part with his army, his sole defence against attack. So, when Mahadji marched away from Dig towards Jaipur (16th February), he gave Himmat Bahadur leave for Vrindāvan with his contingent, on his promising to go and smooth the transfer of his jagirs to Sindhia's agents. [*Ibr.* ii. 154. *HP.* 432.]

Kesho Pant, an officer of Ābā Chitnis, had been deputed with letters of authorisation from Himmat Bahadur to take over charge of the Gosains' Doab possessions. He at first gained undisputed delivery of a number of villages, but none of the forts and larger towns. Then Himmat's elder brother Umrao-gir, who had so long been administering the family jagirs there, began to attack the new Maratha posts, in concert with the local zamindars (esp. the Jat owners of Hathras and Mursan); Sindhia's collectors were imprisoned or expelled, and Keso Pant himself was slain and his war equipment plundered. [*Ibr.* ii. *ASB.* 474, *HP.* 415.]

Seizing the opportunity of this collapse of the Maratha power in the Doab, Himmat Bahadur crossed over from Vrindāvan (*c.* 8 March) and joined his brother's rising. They seized the

thanah of Firuzabad and applied to the Nawab of Oudh for re-entering his service. From Makanpur, Umraogir went over to Khwājah Almas Ali Khan, the Oudh governor of Etawa. An English brigade which happened to advance from Cawnpur at this time, was rumoured to have made this movement for supporting the rebel brothers in case Mahadji marched against them.

This was a most treacherous stab in Sindhia's back, while he was engaged in front with the recalcitrant Rajah of Jaipur in the distant west. The whole of the Doab threatened to be up in arms against the Marathas, with the Nawab Wazir and the English standing behind the rising. Even the newly planted Maratha garrison in Aligarh quaked with fear. Mahadji acted promptly; his scattered detachments in the Doab were hurriedly united under Abhaji (a son of Jaswant Bablé) to strengthen Aligarh. But this force was too small; and Umraogir, after driving out the Maratha collectors of Atrauli, Chharra Bhamauri and other mahals, attacked Abhaji and routed two of his sepoy battalions, capturing their guns. [*Ibr.* ii. 151 and ASB., 474. *HP.* 373.]

On receiving this alarming news, Mahadji ordered Ambaji Inglé, then returning from the Rāghogarh expedition with the large force set free by the conquest of that State, to reinforce Abhaji. This general sent a detachment of 3,000 horse, two sepoy battalions, and 12 guns under Devji Golé, to attack the Gosāins, but to be careful not

to cross the Oudh frontier lest they should provoke a clash with the British troops. At his approach Umrao-gir fled away to Kāsganj on the Ganges, wishing to take refuge in Rohilkhand which was now Oudh territory. Devji gave up the pursuit (end of April) and turned aside to lay siege to the fort near Khurja (in Bulandshahar) which had been usurped by Yaqub Khan.

We may here conclude this narrative by saying that the two Gosains remained quiet in their Oudh asylum for a year after, in consequence of Lord Cornwallis's warning to the Nawab Wazir to observe strict neutrality towards Mahadji. But the convulsion of Maratha authority after his retreat from Lalsot in August, 1787, emboldened them to lead forces for disturbing Sindhia's possessions again and adding to his troubles. [*PRC.* i. 29, 39, and (after Lalsot) 140, 143-176, 210—234. *DY.* i. 170, 184, *Ibr. ASB.* ii. 474-476.]

§ 12. *Bundelkhand adventure, 1785-86.*

Chhatra Sal, the son of Champat Rai Bundela, had carved out for himself a large kingdom in eastern Bundelkhand during a long life of strenuous warfare. His crowning success was the final expulsion of the imperial viceroy, in alliance with the Marathas in 1729. As the price of this decisive aid, he ceded to his patron, the Peshwa, one-third of his realm with a revenue of 30 lakhs of Rupees. The aged and war-worn chief died on 14th December 1731, leaving the

remaining two-thirds of his dominions to his two elder sons, Harde Sah of Panna (revenue 38 lakhs) and Jagat-raj of Banda (revenue 30 lakhs). The younger sons among his numerous progeny (27 sons according to one account, and 52 according to another) received small appanages for their support. The next Peshwa, Balaji Rao, made further acquisitions in western Bundelkhand, yielding 16½ lakhs of Rupees per annum (covering much of the Jhansi district and parts of the Urchha and Datia States),—the whole of which was placed under a Maratha viceroy. Raghunath Hari filled this almost royal post from 1770 to 1794. But with this region we are not concerned here.

A war for the throne broke out in Panna at the time of Mahadji's elevation to the regency. On the death of Hindupat, the grandson of Harde Sah (in 1778), his minor son Anurudh had been enthroned by his powerful ministers Beni Chaube (*Huzuri* and *Diwan*) and Khemrāj Chaube (Treasurer and commandant of the stronghold of Kalinjar.) The boy-prince died (in 1780) and the ministers placed on the throne Dhokal Singh the youngest son of Hindupat, setting aside the rights of his elder brother Sarnet Singh. But the two Chaube King-makers, who were brothers, soon quarrelled over the division of power and profit: Khemrāj took up the cause of Sarnet Singh and sheltered him in Kalinjar. Beni, calling Bijai Bahadur of Charkhari to his aid,

advanced in force and laid siege to Kalinjar. Sarnet and his patron appealed to Noné Arjun Singh, the Banda regent, and also to Mahadji Sindhia. The Maratha leader seized this chance of enriching himself and sent his general Khanderao Hari (popularly called Apa Khanderao) towards Kalinjar (April 1785.)

In Banda, too, there was a minority with disputed succession and ministerial domination. The heritage of Jagat-rāj (who died in 1758) was now divided among his numerous grandsons, two of whom named Guman and Khuman held Banda and Charkhari respectively. There was constant fighting between them as indeed among all the brood of Chhatra Sal, due to earth-hunger. When Guman died childless, his ministers Noné Arjun Singh Pawar, Sardul Singh and Hakim Bu Ali gave the succession to Madhukar Sah, an infant adopted by the late Rajah. Khuman Singh immediately declared the adoption as spurious and claimed the throne on behalf of his own son as next of kin to his dead brother. The ministerial party, paying Mahadji Sindhia Rs. 1,20,000* induced him to undertake the

* *Ibr.* ii. 121. "Noné Arjun and others sent Md. Taqi to Sindhia to beg his aid. He presented a *hundi* for Rs. 1,20,000 on condition of his defending Madhukar Sah." The Poona agent in Mahadji's camp wrote in Aug. 1785: "Khuman S. sent a wakil to Mahadji asking him to punish the minister of the recently deceased Guman and offered a *nazar*. The Banda Rajah, on hearing of it, sent his wakil and won Sindhia over by promising four lakhs, a

defence of their puppet against his uncle. Thus two dynastic quarrels among near cousins became closely mingled together and drew into their vortex all the other Bundela princelings, whose sole occupation was internecine war for grabbing their kinsmen's lands.

Apa Khanderao was Mahadji's viceroy (*sar subahdar*) of Gwalior and Panch Mahal. He was deputed to the Bundela expedition as the scene adjoined his charge. He knew the difficulty of his task and augmented his contingent by new enlistment, especially five trained battalions of sepoys under De Boigne, Taylor, Lesteneau and Rāmru. [*Ibr.* ii. 122-123.] But Khuman Singh forestalled the Maratha general by promptly attacking Arjun near Pandori. He was killed by the second shot fired from the Banda artillery, and the two sides separated after waging a most

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portion of which was assessed on Khuman. The latter did not pay it, but the Banda Rajah paid his share. Hence Khanderao Hari has been sent there" [*HP.* 411.] Next July the same agent wrote : "Guman Singh's diwan was a strong and masterful man. He sought Mahadji's aid, promising to pay Rs. 50,000 as *nazar* for the *tika* [of his nominee] and bankers' bills for five lakhs for the territory of the Jetpur Rajah Gaj Singh, which Guman and Khuman had conquered, besides douceurs to his ministers (*darbar kharch.*) And so he obtained the *tika* [=recognition of succession] in the name of Madhukar. But Khuman would not pay his share of the money. Sindhia therefore sent a clerk with 100 troopers to realise the amount. Khuman befooled his man for one year without paying anything." [*HP.* 478.]

ruthless battle till nightfall. Next day Apa arrived on the scene; Bijay Bahadur, the son of Khuman, retreated to his capital at Charkhari and appealed to the regent of Panna for aid.

As soon as Apa crossed the Betwa river and entered Banda territory, most of the Bundela chiefs saw him and offered their adhesion. Beni Huzuri alone kept aloof. Abandoning the siege of Kalinjar, the Panna regent retired to his capital and put it in a posture of defence, blocking the passes by which the invaders must come. By this time it was August, and the monsoon that year was unusually heavy, with floods everywhere. The campaign was therefore stopped by Nature. During the interval, Beni Huzuri continued to negotiate for peace in return for an indemnity, but his offers were insincere and meant only for gaining time. When the rains ceased, Apa laid siege to Panna, heavily defeated a sortie in full force led by Beni, and coming closer to the walls bombarded the fort for five days. The assault was fixed for the 8th of December 1785, but the night before Beni evacuated the fort with Dhokal Singh and all his men under cover of the darkness. [*HP*. 422.]

It was a grand victory but barren of results. Mahadji boasted of this success to his arms, but here his success ended, and indeed the Maratha position grew steadily worse as the campaign was prolonged, Apa's funds were exhausted and his soldiers mutinied for their long unpaid salary,

while the Bundelas recovered spirit and unity in the face of a common foe. The Maratha general had much ado to save himself. Even at the time of this conquest, his position is thus described by the British Resident with Sindhia: "Apa had before been involved in such distress that Sindhia had lately sent him the most positive order to conclude a treaty upon any terms he could procure and return with his detachment to Gwalior, as it was utterly impossible for him to afford him any reinforcement." [*PRC.* i. 21.] But Apa clung to Kalinjar in the hope of getting more tribute and seizing the treasure reputed to be hoarded in that fort. The result was that in six months his position became untenable. As De Boigne wrote from his camp before Kalinjar on 3rd July 1786: "The tributes are not finished with any of the Rajahs. The troops are very much tired of Apa, as no pay is to be got from him,......the troops are starving. Mr. Taylor's troops have been, for eight or ten days, very mutinous for their pay......Good God! What a kind of man [is Apa],......a miser and mean to excess." [*PRC.* i. 53.]

At last Apa Khanderao was so hemmed round by increasing enemy forces that he found it hard to extricate himself and proposed to retreat northwards across the Jamuna into Oudh territory, as his westward path to Gwalior was blocked. "He had, in confidence, dispatched the greatest part of his troops towards Jhansi, whilst he himself

remained near Panna, with a small body of horse, not exceeding 2,000, to wait the final execution of the treaty [with the Bundela princes.] The Rajahs had taken advantage of this circumstance by suddenly assembling all their forces (20,000 men) and demanding the restitution of the hostages they had given him as a security for the fulfilment of their engagements." (Anderson, 18 Nov. 1786.) But with great difficulty he effected his escape with the Bundela hostages to Gwalior shortly after, though the enemy captured several of his captains, including his own brother. [*PRC.* i. 61, 62.] Thus this huge military expenditure for nineteen months brought nothing in return. [*HP.* 489.]*

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* Bundelkhand. Narrative constructed from the contemporary reports from Sindhia's camp, *HP.* 373, 407, 411, 422, 478, 489. *PRC.* i. 21, 53, 61-62. *Ibr.* ii. 121-125. But *N. W. P. Gaz.*, i. 28, 129, 567, has been used cautiously with many corrections; a good deal of it is taken from Pogson's *Boondelas* verbatim and embodies incorrect later tradition.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Jaipur State and the Imperial Government, 1778—1787.

§ 1. *Jaipur history under Rajah Prithvi Singh, 1768—1778.*

The reign of Sawāi Mādho Singh of Jaipur which had commenced in December 1750 with the tragic death of his predecessor and the national humiliation at the hands of the Marathas, ended eighteen year later (6th March 1768) amidst a blaze of glory caused by his defeat of the all-dreaded Jat Rajah Jawāhir Singh. His throne passed on to his elder son, Prithvi Singh, a boy of five, and the regency was held by his widowed queen, a daughter of Jaswant Singh Chundāwat, the baron of Deogarh in Mewar.

During his reign Mādho Singh had raised three low-born favourites to the highest offices in the State: Khush-hāli Rām Bohrā, a Brahmin who had long been the porter of Ganges water to the king, was made prime minister and justified his elevation by his ability and devotion; Raj Singh Kachhwa, a common trooper who owned no horse of his own but was mounted at the cost of the State (i.e., a *Ghor-charā* or *bārgir*, as he is called), was made army chief (*Senāni*); and a Musalman elephant driver named Firuz

was appointed receiver-general of the State revenue. Immediately after Madho Singh's death, his father-in-law Jaswant came over to Jaipur and began to wield the regency on behalf of his grandson in concert with these three ministers.

A minority is a perilous time among a proud and intractable race like the Rajputs, who cannot tolerate woman's rule. The Kachhwa nobles chafed under the new administration of their country in which none of them had any lot or part. They conspired to overthrow it and establish their own control over the boy king and his State. These nobles formed two clan-groups ; one was that of the Nāthāwats, ranged round the barons of Chomu (the premier peer of the realm) and Sāmod ; while the second was formed by the Rājāwats under the barons or Jhalāi and some other places, these being the king's blood relations and therefore standing nearest in the line of succession to the throne. But these two groups could not always unite even in a common hostility to the interloper from Deogarh and his Brahman ally. Further complication was introduced into the faction-struggle in Jaipur by the rebellion of the ever unruly Shekhāwats (especially the chief of Manoharpur) and the unbridled ambition and selfish treachery of Pratāp Singh Narukā, the baron of Māchéri. During the ten years of Prithvi Singh's reign (7th March 1768—16th April 1778), the Kachhwa

kingdom was free from Maratha incursions and Mughal interference alike, as these two enemies were kept busy by their own troubles ; but for all that this decade was a period of tumult and disruption in the mournful annals of that land.

§ 2. *Rise of Pratap Singh Naruka ; his doings at Jaipur.*

Rāo Pratāp Singh, of the Narukā branch of the Kachhwas, was originally a petty vassal of the Jaipur State, owning only two and a half villages, from one of which he was known as the Mācheri-wālā. But his sleepless ambition and unscrupulous opportunism succeeded so well that before his death (in November 1790) he was recognized by the imperial Government as a Rajah fully independent of his tribal overlord, and he built up a kingdom which to-day embraces 3,158 square miles of territory. This Pratāp Singh early attracted notice by his intelligence and energy, which were in such striking contrast with the other Rajput nobles' opium-bemused stupor, occasionally varied by fits of blind animal fury in the field, that his envious rivals set Mādho Singh against him as a potential aspirant to his throne. The Narukā's life was attempted on the hunting field and he had to leave Jaipur and take refuge with the Jat Rajah. But he regained Mādho Singh's favour by returning to his side and fighting patriotically against Jawāhir in the Jat invasion of 1767-1768. The regency that followed im-

mediately after was his first opportunity; he rapidly seized territories round the nucleus of his poor ancestral acres and built a number of forts, in the undefined borderland between Shekhāwati, Mewāt and the Jat-land. Next he allied himself, now to the Jat Rajah, now to Najaf Khan, as suited his interest for the time being, but was shrewd enough to always take the winning side. The result was that the grateful imperial generalissimo secured for him a confirmation of all his usurpations, the title of Rāo Rājah, a high imperial *mansab,* and a formal recognition of independence of his overlord of Jaipur. The other Narukās now accepted him as the head of their sept. Meantime he had not cut off his connection with Jaipur. Using the Bohrā's party as his tool, he controlled the administration and gained everything that he desired without bearing the responsibility of any office in the State. His smooth tongue and ready power of deception beguiled every one at the capital, while he went on filching the border lands of the State.

We shall pass over the humiliating history of Jaipur and its bloody faction fights during the nominal reign of Prithvi Singh and the changes in the Narukā's position and policy at the capital; he was in the end left in supreme control, as the helpless people realised that he alone could save the royal house from Mughal greed and baronial anarchy alike. Pratāp Singh Narukā used his power to oust the dowager queen's father and

brother from the administration, got Firuz arrested, squeezed Rupees seven lakhs out of him as the price of his liberation, and confined Khushhāli Rām Bohrā with the consent of the bewildered and helpless queen-mother. But these acts set every one at the capital against him, and the Narukā, in danger of assassination, one night secretly fled away from Jaipur (the second half of 1777).

Next year Rāo Pratāp Singh was called upon to meet an invasion of his eastern frontier by Najaf Khan, who was bent on recovering the places in Mewāt lately usurped by the Narukā. His relations with Najaf, alternating between war submission and war again throughout the year 1778, have been described in Ch. 30 § 1-2. In 1779 the Mir Bakhshi, with a Jaipur army assisting him, pressed the Rāo Rājah so hard as to compel him to pay a visit of submission and to promise tribute. After Najaf Khan's withdrawal to Delhi in November 1779, the Narukā chief secured the patronage of Najaf's local agent, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni, and made him his intercessor with the imperial Government.

The Jaipur Rajah Prithvi Singh died on 16th April 1778, being succeeded by his brother Sawāi Pratāp Singh, a boy of thirteen, and the affairs of that kingdom fell into worse confusion than before. When at the close of the year 1778 the Emperor marched into Jaipur in person, the Kachhwa Court sent Firuz with rich presents and

some tribute to Najaf Khan's camp to make peace. The faithless Narukā chief, then in attendance on the Mir Bakhshi, volunteered to promote his overlord's interests and introduced Firuz to Najaf Khan, but afterwards lured the envoy to Agra and there got him murdered,* after which he seized all the wealth and other belongings of his victim.

§ 3. *Minority of Sawai Pratap Singh: rivalry of the Bohra and Haldia ministers.*

The history of the Kachhwa kingdom under Sawāi Pratāp Singh is a sickening tale. Even during the ten years' rule of his predecessor a rapid decay had set in in that Government. As an eminent Rājasthani historian writes, "This Rajah was a minor, and hence the ladies sitting within the harem dominated the State affairs, with the result that mismanagement prevailed in the public administration" [*Vir Vinod,* p. 1306.] Matters became even worse at the accession of Pratāp Singh. His father Mādho Singh had, on

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* Neither the Persian and Marathi records, nor the Rajasthani sources (so far as these last are known to me), give any support to Tod's allegation that this elephant-driver Firuz played the Mazarin to the queen-mother of Jaipur, the Chundāwatni Rani. The British historian's second statement that she was poisoned by the Narukā, is similarly without evidence. The *Vamsha Bhāskar* (p. 3886) merely states that she fell ill of an incurable malady and died some days after her two sons had arrived at her bed-side (probably in 1777). This does not look like poisoning.

his death-bed, advised his queen not to dismiss Khush-hāli Rām Bohrā as he was well versed in affairs and loyal to his master. But this minister had made many enemies among the hereditary nobles as he did not care to flatter fools. Their intrigues brought about his arrest and confinement in Amber fort. But in the hour of the country's danger from the treacherous attacks of the Narukā and the open threats of the Delhi Government, Khush-hāli Rām was felt to be the only man who could save it, and he was therefore released and restored to the head of the administration. Thus, we find him prime minister again at the accession of Pratāp Singh in April 1778 and then going on an embassy to the camp of Najaf Khan and to the Emperor's Court in order to make terms both for his own Rājah and the Narukā chief. Soon afterwards, he had to take the aid of an imperial force for punishing the ungrateful Narukā, as we have seen in Ch. 30, § 2.

This expedition had a curious after-effect on the internal politics of Jaipur. Three Baniās of Khandelā in the Kachhwa State, named Daulat Rām, Khush-hāli Rām II, and Nand Ram, with their father Chhajju Rām, of the Haldiā family had migrated from the Jaipur Court and gone to Māchcri, where they had risen to the head of the administration and the charge of important forts. But by reason of their having spitefully counselled their new master not pay his debt to the

Jaipur State and thus provoked the recent joint invasion, he in his hour of defeat threatened to imprison and plunder them. So the entire Haldiā family took shelter in Najaf's camp (*c.* January 1779). Here Khush-hāli Rām Bohra took them under his protection, appointed Daulat Rām as his deputy at his master's Court during his frequent absences on diplomatic missions, and posted his namesake, Khush-hāli Rām the Haldiā, as his agent in Najaf's camp (*c.* March 1779).

In a few months' time Daulat Rām contrived to win the Rajah's confidence and caused his patron the Bohrā to be thrown into prison (end of July. *CPC.* v. 1573.) But before the year was over, there was another turn in Fortune's wheel at Jaipur: the Haldiā brothers fell into disfavour and had to flee to Najaf Khan to save their lives. From April 1780 to February 1781, Daulat Rām accompanied Mahbub Ali Khan in his invasion of Jaipur [Ch. 31, § 4], while his brother Khush-hāli Rām II attended at Delhi. This led to the release of the Bohrā, as he was found to be the only faithful and able diplomat left to the Kachhwas. On 8th March 1780, the Bohrā was deputed by the Jaipur Court as their *wakil* to negotiate with Najaf Khan for the tribute due and to stop the encroachments of the Narukā. But evidently he could do nothing with his limited powers and in the face of constant obstruction behind his back by his rivals at Court. Therefore, as Mahbub Ali's invasion developed

and he began to hammer at the gates of Jaipur, the Rajah bowed to necessity and on 18th October created the Bohrā the supreme regent of Jaipur with full authority over all the sardars, great and small. [Br. Mus. Or. 25,020 *f.* 50*a*, 25,021 *f.* 313*b*.]

We may here briefly narrate the course of Khush-hāli Rām's diplomacy towards the imperial Government at this time. He failed to avert the invasion of his country planned by Najaf Khan, because his master was neither willing nor able to pay the enormous arrears of tribute that had accumulated. As Mahbub Ali Khan advanced conquering, the Jaipur regent offered only Rs. 1,70,000 in cash and the rest in promises (17th Sept.),—an offer which Najaf Khan at once declined as utterly insufficient. Unable to stem the Muslim invasion, the Jaipur Court ordered Rodā Ram (originally a tailor and now the Rajah's *khawās*) to go forth and oppose Mahbub Ali ; but he did nothing. War is not a tailor's business. Their next step was to solicit the Narukā to come to the rescue of his tribal head (30th Oct.). But the Rāo Rājah declined, saying that he had no faith in the Jaipur Government, as his life had been once attempted in that capital and at another time his lands had been wrested by Najaf Khan at their instance. Then Khush-hāli Rām Bohrā changed his policy, and tried to make terms with Mahbub, even offering to hire his force if he would help the Kachhwa State to

recover the lands unlawfully seized by the Rāo Rājah. All this time the Narukā continued to raid and ravage Jaipur territory on the Shekhāwati border, and Khush-hāli Rām I was unable to check him with his weak contingent (March 1781.) Finally Mahbub Ali's army broke up for want of money and Mirzā Najaf transferred the collection of the Jaipur tribute to Gosāin Himmat Bahadur once again. On 27th April 1781 the Gosāin interviewed the Jaipur Rajah through Khush-hāli Rām I and the following settlement was made: "Himmat Bahadur swore on Ganges water that he would never act against the Rajah of Jaipur. The Rajah made over to Himmat Bahadur *mahals* calculated to yield 12 lakhs of Rupees a year, one half of which was to be remitted to Najaf Khan and the other half spent in maintaining the troops kept there for the work of collection ; the imperialists were to set up their military posts there."* Next month the Gosāin realised Rs. 75,000 and sent the amount to his master in Delhi, [*f.* 335*b*.] Daulat Rām Haldiā now returned to Jaipur and was appointed army chief (*bakhshi*.)

At this time Himmat Bahadur helped the Jaipur State with his own contingent in defeating and capturing the Maratha mercenary Jaswant Rao Bāble, who had long served the

* Najaf Khan, on receiving the report of this, angrily cried out, "Always mere words and evasive tricks! No money ever paid." [Br. Mus. Or. 25,020, *f.* 221*b*.]

Jaipur State, but being unpaid had tried to make himself forcibly master of Mālpurā and Todā on the ground that these were Solanki colonies and he was a Deccani Solanki (*i.e.*, Chālukya, in Marathi Sulké): Bāblé's son Shambhuji was killed and all his war equipment and other property plundered. [*Vamsha Bhās.* 3889.] Jaipur hostility to the Rāo Rājah continued and the latter made Muhammad Beg Hamadāni his patron for a money consideration.

This brings us to the middle of the year 1781. Immediately afterwards another palace revolution took place at Jaipur; Khush-hāli Rām Bohrā was thrown into prison and Daulat Rām Haldiā was re-appointed prime minister at the end of July 1781 [*DY.* i. 31.] The Haldiās governed the State for the next five years. But on 15th November, 1784, Khush-hāli Rām II (*i.e.*, Haldiā) was murdered in Afrāsiyāb Khan's camp by an agent of the Mācheri Rājah. Daulat Rām fell from favour and his high office in April 1786 and migrated with his family to Lucknow. The Bohrā now became prime minister again. But his resurrection was short: in January next Daulat Rām returned and became the Rajah's favourite again by pursuing a bold foreign policy. Khush-hāli Rām was staying with Rāyāji Pātil, the tribute-collector left behind by Sindhia, when a murderous assault was made on him by his Rajah's order during a pretended parley. So,

when Mahadji arrived at the end of March, the Bohrā sought refuge with him to save his life. [*DY*. i. 173, 200. *HP*. 476, 468.]

§ 4. *Character of Sawāi Pratāp Singh: disorder, maladministration and national weakness.*

This eternal seesaw in the choice of the first servant of the State, with its consequent suffering of the people, can be explained only by the character of the Kachhwa Rajah.* Sawāi Pratāp Singh had no brains, but was not harmless and quiescent like most other imbeciles; his folly burst out in capricious violence. Anticipating the decadent Nawabs of Oudh, he used to dress himself like a female, tie bells to his ankles and dance within the harem. His time was mostly devoted to drinking and attending songs and dances. When he issued from his palace, it was only for galloping through the streets or for visiting the temples out of idle curiosity rather than piety. Sometimes he would sally forth at night with the ruffianly companions of his wine-cup, raid the houses of the bankers and jewellers, beat them and snatch away their money! In addition to his unkingly and unmanly vices, his reckless speech and violent temper alienated the proud Rajput nobility and they left his capital for their seats in shame and disgust.

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* G. Ali, iii. 231. Br. Mus. Or. 25,020 *f*. 306, 25,021 *f*. 8. *DY*. i. 165. Jodhpur, Letter no. 2. *HP*. 411, 476.

The public administration was utterly neglected. The State was ruled by officers who were their own masters and selfishly quarrelled among themselves. The young Rajah gave his personal favour with supreme power over his Government to a tailor named Rodā Rām (popularly called Rodoji,) because this man was in charge of the Rajah's food and drink and thus guarded him against poisoning. The second office in the State, though the first in theory, alternated between the old Brahman diwān Khush-hāli Rām Bohra (whom the Rajah disliked) and Daulat Rām Haldiā, a trader by caste. As a Maratha envoy truly reported, "I hear that the Jaipur Government has no money and no *man* in its royal family. The regent is a tailor, the second minister is a Brahman, the ex-purveyor of Ganges water. The rest are *baniās*. Thus is the Rajah's administration conducted! He has no troops." [*DY*. i. 165.]

As early as June 1781 the nobles of the State had warned Sawāi Pratāp Singh, "Our kingdom is going out of our hands. You should apply some remedy to set it right." The Rajah's reply was, "You are the pillars of my State. Carry out any plan that you consider best." The diwan asked the leading barons to be always in attendance at the capital, pay their due revenue, carry out the orders of the Government and serve the State. The nobles, who were mostly their prince's clansmen and had fought loyally for his ancestors,

could not bear the disgrace of taking their orders from the low men who now dominated the Court, and yet the Rajah refused to dismiss the tailor. So, the nobles kept away from the capital, even as late as April 1786, leaving the Rajah to his fate. The Shekhāwat vassals took to a more aggressive course and seized his territory near their estates.

While thus abandoned by the warriors of his land, Sawāi Pratāp Singh also made Khush-hāli Bohrā his enemy. This old minister had a real affection for his former masters, Mādho Singh and Prithvi Singh. The last-named Rajah had left behind him a son Mān Singh, only six months old at the time of his death. But the little orphan's rights were set at nought by the late king's younger brother Pratāp Singh. To save the child from possible murder, Khush-hāli Rām contrived to send him away to his maternal grandfather's house in Kishangarh. This roused Sawāi Pratāp Singh to fury ; he put Khush-hāli Rām in prison and declared Mān Singh a spurious child. But Mān Singh remained a pawn in the hands of those who wanted to save the Kachhwa kingdom by removing a sovereign who only disgraced his throne. Plans were constantly formed and appeals were made to Mahādji Sindhia in the name of the lawful heir of Jaipur to replace Pratāp Singh by Mān Singh with his armed help. The prime mover in these conspiracies was the Narukā Rāo Rājah who aspired to rule the State as guardian of the boy Mān Singh. Khush-hāli Rām Bohra

inclined to these plots only when Sawāi Pratāp Singh made his life intolerable, i.e., after 1786. Mahādji, however, never seriously contemplated such a change, and he kept Mān Singh for the rest of his life at Vrindāvan on a jagir given by him.

§ 5. *Jaipur Rajah's tribute to Emperor unpaid.*

Mahādji Sindhia, as Mir Bakhshi, found himself burdened with the duty of collecting from the Jaipur Rajah the enormous dues of two different masters. The Jaipur State had, at different times in the past, bound itself to pay the Marathas large contributions, besides which quite recently (in 1779) the Rajah had promised to the Emperor 20 lakhs of Rupees as succession fine and tribute, payable through the medium of the Mir Bakhshi. Mahādji had to take this claim up among the first tasks of his new office. But the habitual conduct of the Kachhwa Government proved that nothing short of armed coercion and seizure of territory would secure any money from it.

We have seem in Chapter 18, § 1 that the total contribution promised by the Jaipur Rajah to the Marathas in 1748-51 was 12 lakhs, and that in July 1757 Raghunath Dada and Holkar realised six lakhs out of it. In September 1758 Mādho Singh was coerced into promising 36 lakhs *plus* 3 lakhs more. Malhar Rao Holkar was unable to collect any portion of these dues either by his expedition of 1759 or by his viceroy at Mangrol in

1761. [§ 7-10.] But in 1765 the Jaipur Rajah made terms with Holkar and paid five lakhs down with bankers' bills for another four lakhs. [Ch. 24, § 12.]

During the Emperor's march to Rajputana early in 1779, the Jaipur Rajah paid him two lakhs and promised a further sum of 20 lakhs by instalments [Ch. 30, § 3.] When these fell into arrears, Najaf sent Mahbub Ali to enforce payment, 1780-81, but without any success. Hence in March 1781 he sent Himmat Bahadur to Jaipur to try persuasion. The Gosāin secured one instalment of Rs. 75,000 and probably one more. But throughout the three years 1782-'84 nothing was paid by the Kachhwa king, who took advantage of the internal quarrels and weakness of the Delhi Government to defy it.

Therefore, after crushing Muhammad Beg Hamadāni and making terms with the Rajahs of Bharatpur and Māchcri, Mahādji attacked the Jaipur frontier at Mahewa-Ramgarh. But Khushhāli Rām Bohrā, now met him with peace offers, taking the place of his murdered namesake the Haldiā, as the agent of Jaipur in the imperial camp. The tribute was settled at 21 lakhs* and the envoy took his leave to raise the money, a

* Two lakhs in cash and two lakhs in jewels, payable immediately. Ten lakhs by cession of territory, and seven lakhs ordered on the vassal nobles. The *sebandi* troops stationed for collecting the last item were to be chargeable on these nobles. [*HP*. 406. *DY*. i. 133.]

Muslim officer of Afrāsiyāb's service being sent with him (*c.* 25 Dec. 1784.) But throughout the year 1785 the Jaipur Rajah paid only three lakhs, when he saw the new imperial regent fully absorbed in a struggle with the refractory officers of Afrāsiyāb Khan and not yet firmly in the saddle as the executive head of the Delhi Government.

§ 6. *Mahādji Sindhia's first invasion of Jaipur 1786. Settlement of the tribute.*

Aligarh capitulated on 20th November, and thus freed from his anxiety, Sindhia began (on 3rd January 1786) his march towards Jaipur, taking the Emperor with himself. Arrived near Dig he halted for over a month (10 Jan.—15 Feb.) trying to secure a peaceful payment through the mediation of the Narukā and the Bohrā. But the hope faded away, and at last the entire camp resumed its advance (on 15 Feb.), arriving near Lalsot on the first of the next month. The Rao Rajah of Māchcri had been sent on to Jaipur in advance. He returned with the Jaipur envoys, Bālāji Mahant (the spiritual guide of the late Rajah Mādho Singh) and the Bohrā minister on 6th March. Mahādji himself paid the first visit to Bālāji and prostrated himself before him. The Brahman in pontifical pride did not rise to welcome him, but graciously stretched his leg forward and the supreme lord of legions rubbed his forehead on the monk's holy toes (8th March.)

On the 10th discussions were opened. Last year, out of the tribute settled (21 lakhs), only three lakhs had been paid and certain parganahs (Hindaun &c.) with an estimated revenue of 10 lakhs ceded; these had been occupied on behalf of Sindhia by the Narukā and Najaf Quli Khan. The Jaipur envoy now begged Sindhia to release these lands and also to deduct from the tribute due an estimated compensation for the damage to the crops caused by the imperial army of occupation. [*DY.* i. 162.] The higgling was long protracted, and at times threatened to end in a rupture because of the double-dealing of the selfish Narukā. If Mahādji had agreed to the moderate sum offered by the Jaipur envoy, it would in all probability have been actually realised through the wise Khush-hāli Rām's influence and exertions. But the Narukā Pratāp Singh, unwilling to promote a peace which would make him disgorge Narnaul and other parganahs, cunningly set Mahādji against any reasonable settlement by advising him to rise absurdly high in his demands (to 60 lakhs), and told him that if he accepted any smaller sum after personally coming all the way from Dig to Jaipur and bringing the Emperor himself in his train, it would lower his prestige! He even suggested that, if the reigning king of Jaipur failed to find such a large sum, he should be deposed and Mān Singh set up on the throne, with the Narukā Pratāp as his guardian and regent, in return for which post he would pay

Sindhia 50 lakhs. This selfish man's one aim was to perpetuate his hold on the Kachhwa kingdom by becoming the all-powerful Maratha's agent and representative there. In the course of time Mahādji realised that the Mācheri chief was a deceiver and mischief-maker, saying one thing to him and another to the Jaipur Rajah. [*Ibr*. ii. 156.]

During the parleys, the Jaipur side offered ten lakhs in full clearance of all the arrears and including the present year's instalment of the tribute. But Mahādji said that the arrears had now reached a total of three krores and forty lakhs;—to which Khush-hāli Rām replied, "We have not even so many pebbles. Where can we find that number of rupees?" After much talk it was at last agreed by both sides that the Kachhwa kingdom should pay 63 lakhs (60 lakhs as *peshkash* and three lakhs as *darbar* charges), and out of this amount eleven lakhs were to be paid immediately (cash 7 lakhs, jewels 3 lakhs, elephants and horses 1 lakh),—ten lakhs were to be paid in six months' time, and twenty lakhs were to be provided by the cession of land; and the remaining 22 lakhs were covered by assignments on the revenue of the fiefs of the feudal barons. But the collections already made by the imperialists during their recent occupation were to be set off against the last item. [*DY*. i. 163. Satara ii. 254. *Ibr*. ii. 155.]

These terms being settled, the Jaipur envoys paid three lakhs in cash and kind, and Khush-hāli Rām took his leave (on 20th April, 1786) to collect the balance of eight lakhs and thus liquidate the first instalment. At Jaipur, the Bohrā squeezed some money out of Rodā Rām khawās,—who had made hay while enjoying the sunshine of royal favour—and assessed the richer citizens individually for forced contributions. Payment was enforced by confinement. His dismissed rival, Daulat Rām Haldiā, then migrated to Oudh with his family. "Khush-hāli Rām, on becoming regent again, restored all the former officials to their posts and imprisoned the new ones [of the Haldiā party], released the bankers and other rich people then in confinement, reassured the citizens and made them reopen their shops." [*HP.* 476. *Aiti. Tip.* vi. 41.]

The first quota of eleven lakhs having been fully discharged by the end of May, Sindhia left Rāyāji Pātil with a strong force, as well as Najaf Quli and the Mācheri Rajah, in that kingdom for collecting the second instalment of ten lakhs and the assignment for 22 lakhs on the baronial estates, and also for holding the ceded districts. Then he started on his return journey on 4th June, reaching Dig on the 20th. Two days later the Emperor set out for Delhi, and four days after him Mahādji moved to Mathura, where and at Vrindāvan a few miles north of it, he passed the next five months.

§ 7. *Sindhia's anxieties and money difficulties during 1786. His movements in January and February 1787.*

Throughout the year 1785 Mahadji had been worn out by harassing anxiety and opposition, and he had to make his position as Regent of the Empire good by capturing Dig, Agra and Aligarh, and to reopen the Deccan road by suppressing the troublesome Khichis of Rāghogarh. No doubt, at the beginning of 1786 the political sky in the north had cleared and he felt himself free to march to Jaipur and press the Rajah for the tribute due. But this year was a period of no less anxiety to the Maratha nation than the preceding one: their chief in Puna was engaged, with very inferior armed resources of his own and the lukewarm aid of a Haidarabad contingent, in a deadly contest with Tipu Sultan at the head of a superb cavalry and a matchless artillery worked by Frenchmen. And it was only on 26 February 1787, that this war was ended by the treaty of Gajendragarh. In addition to this long and serious entanglement which killed all hopes of his getting any support from his Central Government, Mahadji was involved in difficulties of his own,—a rupture with the British resident James Anderson over Faqir Khair-ud-din (March-May 1786), the revolt of Gosain Himmat Bahadur, and the encirclement of his general Khande Rao Hari in Bundelkhand (Oct.-Nov.) But towards the close of the year the situation had greatly eased, except

for his money difficulties which became more and more hopeless.

The portion of the Mughal Empire that still belonged to the Padishah was yielding no revenue: it had now shrunk into half the middle Doab and the Delhi-Agra districts. But even here much of the land had been alienated by Mirzā Najaf Khan as military fiefs. What little remained under the Crown had not yet recovered from the ravages of fifteen years' anarchy and civil war and the continuous drought of the last three years. Sindhia tried one chancellor after another in his attempt to raise a revenue from Hindustan ; but he could as soon have drawn blood out of stone. This failure, which he wrongly ascribed to the negligence or peculation of his *diwans,* almost drove him mad and he wanted to see if more money would flow from his doing the diwan's work himself! Such an attempt meant in effect that he threw himself into the arms of irresponsible and incompetent low class officials or smooth-spoken cheats. Old men sadly noted this infatuation of the supreme executive head of an empire, but could do nothing to avert his ruin. By the end of 1786, the Emperor's monthly allowance of Rs. 1,30,000 was already five months due, the pay of the troops had fallen still more heavily into arrears. And during his long halt at Vrindavan Mahadji had lavished large sums on the temples and priests—in prayers for the gift of a son and heir.

Finally leaving Vrindavan on 17th November, he arrived on the bank of the Jamuna at Chirghat, 15 miles northwards, close to the fortalice of Shergarh. As the Mewatis were disturbing the country to his west, he made a march in that direction and reached Nandgāon (15 miles south-west of Shergarh) about the 10th of December next. Here James Anderson took leave of him (13th Dec.) on retirement to England. Shortly afterwards Mahadji marched north-westwards into Mewat in order to overawe the rebels there, especially Murād Beg, a Mughal officer of the Najaf Khani service, whom Sindhia wanted to remove from the possession of Kishangarh fort (13 miles west of Firuzpur-Jhirka) and the governorship of Mewat. This having been peacefully effected, he turned north to Pinjor, 8 m. north of Hodal (*c.* 30th Dec.) so as to be nearer to Delhi and more speedily conclude his negotiations for bringing the Emperor to his camp, and also to check the Sikh raids into the north Delhi tract. An expedition against Ghulam Qadir, the successor of Zābita Khan, for the purpose of wresting the Saharanpur district from him, was also contemplated. In fact, Mahadji's mind was not yet made up: he meant to shape his policy according to the actual conduct of the Jaipur Government. In the neighbourhood of Hodal he lay encamped for the next two months. And here he received his two Delhi agents—Shah Nizāmuddin and Ladoji Deshmukh, whom the Emperor had sent

(on 6th February 1787) to dun him for his outstanding allowances, now amounting to Rs. 8,40,000. It was no easy matter for Sindhia to find such a sum, and he detained the envoys for three weeks, after which he sent them back (27th Feb.) with bankers' bills for two lakhs payable at sight, assignments for five lakhs on the revenue of Mirat and other mahals, and a promise to pay up the balance of Rs. 1,40,000 in two months. The next day Sindhia set his face southwards for Dig, where he celebrated the Spring Carnival on 4th March, and then on the 16th of that month began the invasion of Jaipur in person.

§ 8. *How the Jaipur Government provoked invasion in 1787.*

When in June of the previous year Mahadji had retired from the Jaipur kingdom, he had left behind him Najaf Quli Khan and the Rao Rajah of Macheri to collect the promised tribute. Both of these agents were lukewarm in his cause, the first through habitual indolence and self-indulgence, and the second through the selfish design of enlarging his own State at the expense of Jaipur. Of his own men Sindhia had quartered a contingent under the faithful Rāyāji Pātil there, to collect the sums assigned upon the vassals of the Kachhwa kingdom. This force, a little over 5,000 Deccani horse, could do nothing decisive when matters came to a fight.

The fact was, the Jaipur Rajah had no wish to pay anything. "Every time after great effort and the assembling of an army against him, a little money could be collected from him." [G. Ali, iii. 231, *Ibr.* 162.] Experience had also taught Sindhia that he could not put the necessary pressure upon the Rajah by means of his agents and that if he expected any substantial result he must go there in person.

In addition to this persistent default, Rajah Sawai Pratap Singh had sent his ex-diwan Daulat Ram Haldia to Lucknow (May 1786) to intrigue for the hiring of an English force against the Marathas. This agent spent eight months there, and though the new Governor-General Lord Cornwallis definitely forbade any English intervention in the quarrels of the Indian States, some local British officials (like Kirkpatrick), out of alarm at Sindhia's designs in the Doab, encouraged Daulat Ram's hopes of armed aid from their Government. In January 1787, Haldia returned to Jaipur and was installed as prime minister once more, while Khush-hāli Rām Bohrā, who stood for friendly relations with the Marathas, fell out of favour. The Bohra's greatest crime in his master's eyes was his kindness to Mān Singh, the dispossessed legitimate heir, whom he was accused of trying to instal on the throne by the aid of Mahadji. [*DY.* i. 173, 220. *PRC.* 86.]

Meantime Sindhia had proposed to the Jaipur Court a marriage between his little daughter and

their young Rajah, but it was declined on account of the difference in caste between them. The Rajputs refused to recognise the Maratés as Kshatriyas of equal purity.

With the return of Daulat Ram to power and on the strength of the rumours which he brought that the English were concentrating their forces in the Doab against Mahadji's eastern frontier, the Jaipur Government took up a vigorous policy of resistance. A close defensive alliance was formed with the neighbouring Rajah of Jodhpur, and the Kachhwa vassals everywhere were ordered to refuse payment of the sums assigned on them to Mahadji by last year's treaty and to resist the Marathas by force. The Rajah shut himself up in his capital and prepared to stand a siege, abandoning the idea of fighting the invaders in the open. The tortoise drew his head into his impenetrable shell and lay in motionless security there, shutting his eyes to his realm outside which lay bare to the invader's fury.

Rayaji Patil and his colleagues had at first gained some successes and occupied some of the outlying parts of the Kachhwa kingdom. Then came the Rajput reaction. Towards the end of December 1786, he lost 700 men in an abortive assault on a local mud-fort. The situation became steadily worse after the return of Haldia, and at the end of February Mahadji had to send up a strong force under his Bakhshi Jivā Dādā to

support Rāyāji. [*DY*. 173, 216, 199. *Ibr*. ii. 163. *PRC*. i. 80.]

This brings us to March 1787. In the middle of that month Mahādji definitely set out on the invasion of Jaipur, for he had at last become convinced that nothing short of annexation of a portion of Jaipur territory would enable him to secure payment of the enormous contributions which the Kachhwa Rajah owed to the Emperor and to the Peshwa. We see repeated here the intolerable position of Dalhousie when confronted with the eternal default of the Nizām in paying for his subsidiary force.

It was, however, after long hesitation that Mahadji chose to draw the sword. The Emperor, fearful of his own safety, wrote again and again urging his Regent not to advance beyond Dig with the bulk of his army, lest the English should swoop down upon defenceless Delhi and enthrone some princely puppet of their own, as they had already done in Bengal and Oudh. Such a suspicion was strengthened by the recent massing of English troops on the Doab frontier of Oudh, as far as Farrukhabad where no European infantry had been seen before this. [*DY*. i. 213, 220. G. Ali iii. 231. ML. 301. *PRC*. i. 99.]

At first, so long as Sindhia did not lose all hope of getting any money from Jaipur through his agents, his chief concern was to protect the north Delhi region from the Sikhs by sending a strong force there under Ambaji Inglé and also to

hire the Sikh leaders for an invasion of Saharanpur in order to exact tribute from Ghulam Qadir Khan. But Ambaji totally failed in the second part of his mission, and the fear of British intervention from the Fathgarh camp made Mahadji finally give up his ambitions in the upper Doab. [*PRC.* i. 77, 78.]

At Jaipur, too, his earlier hopes faded away as completely, and this enforced on him a policy of active aggression. In December 1786 the power of that kingdom had reached its low ebb from the lack of a policy and a leader to enforce it, dissensions among the nobles in the capital, and a temporary coolness with its only ally the Jodhpur Rajah whom Sindhia's agents had approached with success. Matters came to such a pass that in the middle of January next the discontented and long unpaid generals of the Kachhwa State agreed to open the gates of the capital and admit the Maratha troops for a bribe of Rs. 80,000. But the plot did not mature. Daulat Ram Haldiā returned from Lucknow a few days afterwards, the pro-Maratha faction among the Rajah's nobles was crushed and Haldiā became prime minister once more, bent on pursuing an open anti-Maratha policy (*c.* 20 January.) The quarrel with Jodhpur was quickly made up and armed preparations for defence were pushed on. Rāyāji Pātil's position was rendered still weaker by the enemy's busy seduction of his faithless Mughalia contingent with promises to pay their arrears of salary. He, there-

fore, wrote "daily urging his master to advance speedily to his support." [*Ibr.* ii. 163. *PRC.* i. 71, 82.]

§ 9. *Sindhia's march into Jaipur; attempts at compromise.*

Mahadji took prompt action. Leaving Dig on 16th March and making daily marches without a halt, he reached Dāosā on the 24th. This place lies 32 miles east of Jaipur; the advanced division of the Maratha army under Rāyāji, stood near Sangāner, seven miles south of the Kachhwā capital. But seemingly diplomacy had not yet been exhausted. Peace envoys from Jaipur attended Mahadji's camp discussing the amount of their tribute. But there was a conflict of counsel in his inner circle: the ever-sober Rānā Khan and the practical Rāyāji Pātil pressed him to accept a moderate tribute by way of compromise and retire immediately from Rajputana so as to avoid the increasing summer heat and to overawe his many secret enemies by occupying a more central position like Mathura. But the Rao Rajah and Khush-hali Ram appealed to his vanity by pointing out that after coming to the gates of Jaipur in person he could not, consistently with his dignity, retire with only the small tribute which had been offered to his servants before. The Macheri chief knew that if Sindhia got only a trifle from Jaipur he would try to recoup himself for the heavy expenses of this expedition by seizing Macheri

territory. And Khush-hali Ram Bohra knew that with the coming back of his Haldia rival he had lost all his posts and property in Jaipur and could not return there and remain alive. These two therefore fed Mahadji's ambition and pride by assuring him that at his mere appearance before the gates of Jaipur that city would fall in terror of his arms and that he would be able to annex the whole Kachhwa kingdom to his own dominions which would then stretch in unbroken extent from Ujjain to Delhi and from the Ganges to Ajmir. Faced by these two rival policies, Mahadji Sindhia seemed to have lost for a time his political vision and sense of reality. "He came under unlucky stars and his eyes were clouded by sloth," as his admirer Khair-ud-din admits. He cried out in exasperation at the Jaipur Rajahs persistent breach of faith that he would "empty the Jaipur capital of its defenders and seize it, as he had done Gwalior and Gohad." [*Ibr.* iii. 3, *DY*. i. 210.] The Rao Rajah and Khush-hali Ram and the other Jaipur refugees, having wormed their way into Mahadji's confidence, proposed to him to make Mān Singh Rajah of half the Kachhwa kingdom as a Maratha *protegee* and rival to Sawai Pratap Singh. They themselves would act as his regents and recompense Sindhia for his armed aid by giving him bonds for the regular payment of the fixed tribute in future. [*DY*. i. 201.]

In another way, too, a peaceful settlement was rendered impossible by the stiffening of the Jaipur attitude, as allies began to gather for the defence of that State. Pratap Singh, through his favourite Rodā Rām (ex-tailor), informed Sindhia, "The arrears of past tribute amount to 12 lakhs. Out of this, take four lakhs down, two lakhs more will be paid in July, and the remaining moiety of six lakhs will be discharged by the assignment of land." But he did not really mean to keep his word; on 7th April his envoys abruptly left the Maratha camp without coming to any settlement or even taking formal leave. [*DY.* 201, 211. *PRC.* i. p. 169.] Mahadji in anger expelled every Jaipur agent and news-writer from his camp and next day made a rapid march westwards to Bhānkri, which is only 13 miles from Jaipur, in order to increase his pressure on the Rajah. His vanguard, under Rayaji, now advanced from his post at Sanganer seven miles south of Jaipur to the gates of that city.

But this distant demonstration of force produced no result. The tortoise would not move nor even stretch its neck out of its shell. So, Mahadji stooped to invite the Jaipur envoys back to his camp at Bhānkri. They returned on 14th April, but the terms they offered were even more unsatisfactory than before and no Regent of the Empire could accept them with honour: "The Jaipur Rajah offered four lakhs immediately and demanded the surrender of Khush-hali Ram

Bohra to him, after which he would clear the balance of the tribute. Mahadji refused to set off against his claims anything on the ground of damage to crops (*pāi-māli*) by his troops, or to surrender the Bohra. Hence a rupture took place." [Hingane's despatch, *DY*. i. 220. *PRC*. i. p. 169.]

CHAPTER XXXV

THE LALSOT CAMPAIGN, 1787.

§ 1. *Second stage of campaign: Mahadji retires from before Jaipur, May 1787.*

Nothing was now left to Sindhia but to throw his sword into the scale. But even for a trial of arms his relative superiority had vanished during this delay. Thanks to Daulat Ram's vigorous action, the Jaipur Rajah had had time to assemble his feudal levies, numbering about 20,000. His ally of Jodhpur sent to him 5,000 of the wild Rathor horse, and 5000 mercenary Naga musketeers under his general Bhim Singh. [*DY.* 201, 200.] Worst of all, the Jaipur diwan was meeting with success in seducing the old Najaf Khani troops, both Mughalia horse and Hindustani sepoys, now under Sindhia's banners. The allied Rajputs now put a bold face on, and issuing from the capital (1st May) encamped some miles south of it, in order to bar any further Maratha advance. Their Rajah himself joined this camp on the 2nd. "Sindhia became at length convinced that he had grasped at too many objects together, and he *secretly* acknowledged his indiscretion in having underrated the strength of the Rajput confederacy and overvalued . . . the fame and dread of his power." [Kirkpatrick in *PRC.* i. p. 180.] So, he judged it unsafe to remain near Jaipur, and adopted the plan of seizing the forts

of the Kachhwa Rajah's vassals and annexing their baronies. [*DY*. 201, 200, 220.]

Recalling Rāyāji Pātil from his advanced position near Sangāner, Mahadji (on 5-7 May) fell back from Bhānkri to Sawlia twenty miles southwards. This place is only 20 miles to the west of Lalsot. He publicly declared that in thus falling back his object was to draw the Rajputs into the open country where he would be able to engage them with greater advantage. But the Rajputs were rightly exultant at this movement of their enemy. The strategic march to the rear had exposed the weakness of Mahadji ; with all his vast forces and artillery and European-led battalions, he had been forced to retreat without obtaining a single Rupee from their Rajah. The enemy army had by this time swollen to 40,000 men. All the country was up in tumult ; outside the Maratha camp the roads could not be traversed in safety ; all caravans were being looted on the way. [*DY*. i. 200. *PRC*. i. pp. 180-186.]

By this move Sindhia had interposed himself between the main Jaipur army (now at Sangāner) and the southern districts of that kingdom. He next marched through the latter region, raiding and levying contribution, and seizing forts like Jhālāi, Navai &c., till he reached the Banās river near Sārsop, close to the Bundi frontier. Meantime, his Hindustani and Mughalia troops continued to desert him everyday, though in small numbers. On the 6th of May, two eminent

captains, Zulfiqār Ali Khan and Mansur Ali Khan, secretly went over to the enemy with their forces. The climax came on the 25th of that month when the greatest Mughalia general, Muhammad Beg Hamadāni joined the Rajah of Jaipur, to the intense terror and despair of the Maratha army. He was promised Rs. 3000 a day and given a royal welcome by his new master who made him the leader of the defence, as his unquestionable ability and fame deserved. [*DY.* i. 220, 221. *DC.*]

§ 2. *Third stage of campaign: Muhammad Beg Hamadani's desertion; Sindhia retreats eastwards.*

Muhammad Beg's defection enforced a total change of plan on Mahadji. He could not trust a single Hindustani soldier after this. It now became a question with him how to save his life and the honour of his women who had come with him. Even more painful was the blow to his prestige; a retreat into safety was still possible, but such a confession of failure would make him the laughing stock of Hindustan and of the Puna Court alike and dissolve his newly created power over the imperial Government. He therefore sent off urgent orders to Khande Rao Hari and Ambaji Ingle to hasten to his aid with their divisions and appealed to the Emperor to issue from Delhi and join his camp in order to lend the prestige of his name to his Regent's acts. He fell back from the neighbourhood of Sārsop to Piplāi,

15 miles south-east of Lalsot, arriving there on the the 4th of June.

As soon as the invading army began its retreat, the Rajputs advanced from Sanganer and and on the 10th of that month their Rajah occupied Madhogarh, 17 miles north-west of Lalsot. Two days later they pushed a strong detachment on to Daosa, thus blocking Sindhia's northern path of retreat, viâ Balahari and Dig, to Agra and Delhi, and menacing the kingdom of his ally the Rao Rajah of Macheri, which was thus laid utterly bare of defence.

The Jaipur Rajah having come out of his capital gave Sindhia the opportunity of a fight in the open for which he had been longing. The Rao Rajah gave assurances that by a bold dash on the now poorly guarded Kachhwa capital the Marathas could seize it or secure its evacuation by corrupting its garrison. For a fortnight after Muhammad Beg's defection the enemy took no vigorous offensive, but wasted their opportunity in idle talk while their slender money resources were quickly drained and a quarrel broke out with their Rathor allies about the promised war expenses. [*PRC.* i. 115, 118, 119.]

§ 3. *Fourth stage: Sindhia advances again, reaches Lalsot.*

Sindhia therefore determined to put a bold face on it. Giving up all ideas of retreat, he countermarched towards the enemy position,

arriving a few miles south of Lālsot (probably at Bhaiā kā Bāgh) on 15th June. On the same day the Rajput force at Dāosa pushed a detachment southwards to occupy Ramgarh, which is only 6 miles north-west of Lalsot, thus threatening to oppose the Maratha advance through the latter pass and to pin the invaders down to the dry circuitous route south of it for their communication with Agra.

But though Mahadji had boldly turned at bay, he was really not in a position to risk an action. There was constant and increasing desertion from his North Indian contingent owing to famine prices (wheat selling in his camp at six seers to the Rupee) and his long default in paying their salary. His own faithful Deccani troops cherished a rooted distrust of their North Indian allies and ever stood on the guard against any treacherous attack from that side of the camp. Every one said that on the day of action these Hindustanis would go over to the enemy and turn suddenly upon their professed comrades. Sindhia was therefore forced to put off an action and bide his time till he should be joined by the trusty detachments he had recalled to his aid. These were two: Khande Rao's division in Bundelkhand, consisting of 10,000 hard-bitten veterans and the two disciplined sepoy battalions of De Boigne with their excellent artillery,—and Ambaji Ingle's army, then posted in the Karnal district, nominally 15,000 strong with guns. The

latter was also expected to bring with himself a strong force of hired Sikh cavalry. Ambaji started from Patiala on 7th June but was greatly delayed on the way by heavy rain and local hostility, so that it was as late as the 16th of the next month when he could ride into Mahadji's camp, and that too after leaving his entire force straggling several days' march behind, near Kot-Putli. [*PRC.* i. 117, 122, 124, 129.]

Therefore, for a week after reaching Lalsot, Sindhia firmly held to his cautious resolve and kept his generals back from advancing to seek a conflict with the enemy. The Rajput army, in spite of the tall talk of their generals and the ignorant clamour of their rank and file, really dreaded a trial of strength with Sindhia. They had a salutary fear of his more modern and better served artillery and his fine sepoy battalions under French commandants. They therefore planned to neutralise these advantages of their enemy by delivering battle on a rainy day when gunpowder would be less effective against sword and lance. Or, as an alternative, five thousand Rathor horse, vowed to death, would deliver a wild onslaught on his guns, ride over their brethren mown down by the first discharge or two, and impetuously fall upon the gunners and cut them down before they could load again. The Marathas on their part were terrorised by the reports which their spies brought of the Rajput war-plan of keeping their main force in ambush in the deep ravines

which scored that terrain, and sending a small body onwards to engage the Marathas and then by a pretended flight decoy them into the *nālās*. Hence, Mahadji abandoned his first idea of surprising the immobile Rajput camp at night. He trusted to time for the speedy dissolution of the ill-knit Rajput confederacy; he must fight a field action in which his superiority in artillery and disciplined musketeers would have full effect. [*Akhbarat.*]

§ 4. *Fifth stage: Sindhia advances to seek battle.*

At last, on 23rd June, when the junction of Khande Rao's force was expected on the morrow, Sindhia assumed the offensive. The strictest precaution and order were enforced by this grey veteran leader. His plan was that his main camp should remain behind, some miles south of Lalsot with the baggage guard; Mahadji himself surrounded by 7,000 men and ten large guns, should proceed with light baggage four or five miles ahead of it; Rana Khan Bhai with the main body of his army should advance three or four miles further from his master, while the vanguard of the army, led by Rayaji Patil and Shivaji Vital (Bapu) should be posted two miles in front of Rana Khan and scout for the enemy's approach. In every advance that was made, Rana Khan took up Rayaji's position of the previous evening and Mahadji similarly occupied

Rana Khan's deserted camping ground. This rule was methodically followed throughout the ensuing campaign.

After thus "keeping his powder dry," Mahadji turned to prayer. The eve of the momentous forward movement was spent in vigil and worship. Three hours before dawn he summoned his chosen generalissimo Rana Khan Bhai, washed and clothed him in pure new robes, made him prostrate himself before the idols, rubbed on his forehead the ashes of the *hom* sacrifice just performed, and sent him off invested with Sindhia's own sword and shield. [*Ibr.* iii. 11.] In the course of the next day, Rana Khan occupied the Lalsot pass which the Rajputs had evacuated a few days before by falling back on Ramgarh. On the 26th Khande Rao Hari rode into Sindhia's camp with 3,000 Deccani horse, De Boigne's two battalions 1300 strong, two thousand Naga monks and some three hundred foot of Rajdhar Gujar (the Rajah of Samthar.) Next morning this force was paraded before Mahadji and their muster taken, and the general sent forward to join Rana Khan. [*Ibr.* iii. 20.]. On the 30th of the month Rana Khan advanced some three miles beyond the pass, encamping below the Jowana hill north-west of its end, probably at the modern village of Didwana. A wide plain lay between him and the fort of Ramgarh in the north. Sindhia, according to plan, moved up and occupied the Khan's old

post at the village of Lalsot, at the lower mouth of the pass.

§ 5. *Description of Lalsot and the theatre of war.*

It is necessary to take here a clear view of the theatre of these operations. Thirty miles south-east of the city of Jaipur stands the large village of Lalsot,* near the end of a long chain of low hills and outcrops that runs north-eastwards for many miles up to the Banganga river (near the modern railway junction of Bañdikui) and even beyond it. The entire northern and western sides of the Lalsot district are enclosed, as if held in the tentacles of a gigantic octopus, by countless ravines which roll down to the Morel river, a feeder of the mighty Banas. The eastern side is effectively blocked by the long diagonal chain of the Jawāna hills mentioned above. The south side is comparatively open, and through it runs the road to Kerauli (42 miles east of Lalsot) and Dholpur and Bharatpur, still further off. Lalsot village itself commands the southern mouth of a pass bearing its name, which leads, by a direct but difficult and wild path, to Daosa, 22 miles due north, where the traveller strikes the shortest and most frequented route between Jaipur and Agra. This road runs roughly parallel to the Banganga

* Survey of India, half inch map, sheet No. 54 B/NW.

river and has been followed by the modern railway.

Proceeding from Lalsot through the pass immediately north of it and skirting on his left the mass of hillocks known as *Lalsot-kā-Dungar,* the traveller arrives after three miles at the village of Didwana overlooked by two isolated peaks. Then the level country begins. Turning a little to his left from Didwana, he enters, across two narrow ravines, the wide plain of Ramgarh, named after a village and a fortalice standing four miles north-west of Didwāna.

From Rāmgarh four miles further to the north-west the path strikes the Morel river at a very easy ford free from ravines and *nālās,* opposite the village and fort of Bidakhā. From Bidakhā the path is skirted by two *nālās* for a mile and thereafter the country stretching north-westwards is an almost unbroken plain, dotted with human habitations for six miles till Tungā village is reached. This Tungā was now the base of the main Rajput army that had come out to seek an encounter with the Southern invaders,—their Rajahs being encamped two miles behind at Madhogarh.

The battle of 28th July was fought in the plain between Tungā and Bidakhā, some two miles south-east of the former place and therefore fourteen miles from the village of Lālsot after which it is wrongly named. The advancing Marathas had their back to the Morel river

which they guarded by their recent conquest of Bidakhā fort, and their moving camp lay behind that river to the south-east, near Rāmgarh. Further to the south-east the long line was held by the troops guarding Mahadji and the light camps of his fighting generals, and last of all by his stationary base camp, two or three miles south of Lālsot village.

§ 6. *The rival armies' movements and plans during the month before the battle.*

The forward movement of Mahadji Sindhia's army was begun on 23rd June, but the decisive encounter which he was seeking did not take place till more than a month later. To this delay both sides contributed.* Sindhia waited till he should be joined by the unaccountably slow Ambaji Inglé and he also expected to see the Rajput coalition dissolve quickly. He knew that it is impossible to keep a large body of rustic clansmen together for a long time, so that the divergent elements assembled at Jaipur would quarrel and disperse to their homes if kept idle for a sufficiently long time. Nor would the mercenary Hindustani and Mughalia deserters remain loyal to their new employer when he failed to pay them punctually, and the cash resources of the Kachhwa State were very limited. Therefore he ordered Rānā Khan to advance

* *PRC.* i. 124 *et seq. Akhbarat. DY.* i. 202.

most cautiously, sending his artillery and disciplined musketeers ahead, and decline to be drawn into an engagement unless attacked, and every night fall back on his entrenched camp. During the day Mahadji, who had pushed on to Rana Khan's last encampment, would keep observing the country round, seated on a hillock, telescope in hand.

The Jaipur Rajah, on his part, repressed the ardour of his supporters for a fight, as he was waiting for the junction of helpers from Bikaner, Bundi, Khichiwara and other Rajput centres and particularly for a large body of hired Sindi musketeers who were fondly believed to prove more of a match for Mahadji's French-led sepoy battalions than the Rajput levies mostly armed with the sword and the spear. Nor was he without strong hopes of starving the invaders out, as he had set his vassals to raid the paths of Sindhia's grain supply and his Minas,—those expert hereditary thieves,—to rob the Maratha camp itself every night. This was being done with striking effect and success.

The Jaipur army had a mortal fear of Sindhia's superior artillery and trained battalions of musketeers, and shrank from a field action. Mahadji's salvation lay in the character of the Jaipur Rajah who had no brain, enterprise or even brute courage. As a British observer, unfriendly to Sindhia, remarked, "The Rajah of Jainagar appears to be a man deficient both in

spirit and conduct, . . . a young man immersed in pleasure and exceedingly deficient in judgment, if not also in courage.* The bonds which unite the members of this confederacy are very weak, owing to the jealousy, distrust and even in some degree the opposition of interests, which may be discovered among them." [*PRC.* i. 117, 118.] The Jaipur Rajah's one policy was to avoid a decision by always putting things off to the future. In the daily skirmishes before the great battle, the fighting was done by the Rathors from Jodhpur and the troops of Hamadāni. That Mughal general angrily complained to the Rajah, "If such be the valour of your clansmen that throwing every affair on our shoulders they would stand aloof, then do you entrust all this business to me so that I shall see what I can do. If today [the 13th of July] the Rajputs had bravely exerted themselves, the war would have been decisively ended." The Rajah replied, "The war cannot be decided by skirmishing. On the day of the pitched battle you will witness the valour of the Rajputs." [*Akhbarat.*]

On 10th July a further advance was made by Rana Khan, who moved three miles nearer to the enemy, *i.e.,* towards the Morel river, while Mahadji stepped into his general's last camp, at

* Col. John Colins, who went to Jaipur to secure the person of the fugitive Wazir Ali (the murderer of Mr. Cherry at Benares), reported to the Gov. General about the Rajah in similar terms.

Didwana. Contact was now established between the rival outposts and henceforth skirmishes took place almost daily, but these were barren of any result. As Capt. Kirkpatrick reports, "The two armies, although they have somewhat approached each other, continue to be nearly as inactive as ever. Their operations are confined to the picking up of straggling cattle, the intercepting of small supplies of provisions, and the parading of their respective picquets opposite to one another, but always at such a distance as to preclude the effusion of much blood." [*PRC.* i. p. 204.]

On the 13th and 27th of July the fights between the patrols were of a severer character and the casualties were heavy, one sardar of the Deccan horse being slain at each, and the Rajput side getting the worst of it. There was no activity in the Maratha army for four days from the 15th of the month, when Mahadji's little daughter fell ill of anasarca. She died in the night of the 16th and her fond father was stricken down by grief; he told Rana Khan, "Act as you think fit for the next two or three days, but do not ask me, as I am not in a mood to reply to anything." [*Akh. DY.* i. 240.]

§ 7. *Decision to fight a pitched battle: Maratha advance across the Morel river.*

The mourning over, in the night of the 19th Mahadji received a written challenge from the Jaipur Rajah worded thus: "You are Regent

of the Empire and a veteran in war. Come out of the shelter of your guns into the open field, if you dare, and fight a pitched battle with the Rajputs. We shall see to whom God gives the victory." [*Akhbarat. PRC.* i. p. 207.] Sindhia called his generals together and told them, "If, after this, I make terms with the Jaipur Rajah without fighting one battle, I shall not be able to show my face in Hindustan. A man cannot live for ever. Let what will happen, happen." They objected saying that their soldiers would not fight unless their arrears were paid; that up to now they had fed their retainers by selling their own private property and equipment. He offered Rs. 20,000, which was refused as too little.*

The two sides fixed the 21st for the pitched battle. But when that day dawned the tortoise refused to move, having been dissuaded by his astrologers. But Rana Khan, on his part, pushed on to Bidakha, on the Morel river, which blocked his road to the Jaipur camp, while his vanguard under Ambaji Inglé crossed that river and raided the villages beyond up to two miles of the enemy camp. On the arrival of Rānā Khan in full force (23rd July), the garrison of Bidākha agreed to capitulate with honour. But "when the garrison was coming out, a *pāgā* trooper laid his hand on a Rajput's wife; the Rajput slew

* Mahadji's army bill was Rs. 12½ lakhs a month, and he was already six months in default of payment.

the man, fighting began between the two sides, with the loss of 30 to 40 men altogether, and the garrison went back into their fortalice and renewed their opposition. Afterwards, Ram Sevak (the Rao Rajah's agent) conciliated them and evacuated the garhi under his protection." During the day the main Jaipur army made a half-hearted demonstration to save their brethren in Bidakha and then withdrew to their base. Next day there was no movement on either side owing to rain ; but Rana Khan dismantled the mudfort of Bidakha in order to remove that menace to his free crossing of the river.

Thereafter life in the Maratha camp became unbearable owing to the total stoppage of grain supply and the threatened mutiny of all sections of the army in exasperation at Mahadji's failure to pay their dues. Their starved horses were unable to carry any rider. His captains assembled in a council of war, cried out with one voice, "Better to fight and die than to perish from famine." Mahadji agreed to stake his all on one field fight and ordered five lakhs of Rupees to be paid to his soldiers ((25th July) in order to hearten them for the coming battle. A second challenge was received from the Jaipur Rajah on the 26th, "If you wish to seize my kingdom and will not accept tribute, why are you delaying to fight? Come on tomorrow ; I on my part, will be ready." The entire Maratha army was informed that their

master had taken up the enemy's gauntlet. [*Ibr.* iii. 21.]

After long prayers and *pujā* at midnight, Mahadji took two hours' sleep, then rose up at 4 o'clock in the morning, issued the orders of the day to his generals, ate the holy communion (*prasād*), and at break of day mounted his horse named *Desh-pujya* and rode forth to Rana Khan's camp, some two miles ahead of his own halting-place. The command for the impending battle had been assigned to Rānā Khān Bhāi, with whom Sindhia kept constant touch by a chain of swift couriers mounted on camels. Rana Khan marched about two miles ahead of his master with all his troops and sent his light division a mile further on. At each step that this army took to the front, Sindhia too advanced the same distance behind it, ascending successive hillocks and observing his troops through a field-glass and sending forth despatch-riders with his fresh instructions. In this methodical way, giving not the least chance for a surprise by the enemy or disorder in his own ranks, the veteran went forth to seek the long-looked-for decision at last.

§ 8. *Battle of Tungā.**

Rana Khan forded the dry bed of the Morel at Bidākha, passed clear of the ravines that skirt

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* Battle of Tungā.—*Akhbarat*=*PRC.* i. No. 135=*HP.* 503=*Aiti Patra* No. 261. *Ibr.* iii. 21-28. *DY.* i. 224. *PRC.* i. Nos. 136 & 137. *MD.* ii. 147, 150. *Chandra D.* ii. 71.

the two sides for a mile after the crossing and drew up his line in the plain beyond, a mile further off. First spread a loose screen of scouts for bringing news of the enemy's dispositions and movements. Then came the artillery, and behind it the infantry battalions which were to receive the first shock of the enemy's onset. In the third line were the Maratha horse, held in reserve for supporting any hard-pressed point in the front lines; and with this body stood Rana Khan himself. The last reserve, especially in guns and munitions, was kept under Mahadji himself, two miles behind the battlefront, on the further (*i.e.*, eastern) bank of the Morel. The Maratha artillery, on reaching the battle ground, threw up a line of earthworks before them by digging into the sandy soil and thus their front was protected by an entrenchment about a mile in length. Sindhia's army stretched west to east; their first line was formed by Khanderao Hari with De Boigne's two battalions, the Afghan mercenaries under Murtaza Khan Barech, Ghāzi Khan and other captains, and the Nāgā force of Moti-gir Gosain (Left); then came the disloyal and passive Hindustani sepoys of the old Najaf Khani service (Centre); and lastly the two brigades, each nominally six battalions strong, under the faithful Lesteneau and Le Vassoult, together with the Rajput levies of the Macheri Rajah (Right.)

The Jaipurians began their advance to the contest about the same time that they saw the

Maratha army moving towards them across the Morel. They, too, threw up earth works before their line of guns. On their side the brunt of the battle fell on the Rathor cavalry from Jodhpur (under Bhim Singh Bakhshi) who had vowed in the Rajah's presence not to return alive without victory, and the Mughalia deserters under Muhammad Beg Hamadani, these two generals respectively leading the right and left wings of their army. Their centre was evidently formed by the Kachhwas, who idly kept themselves back, exactly like Mahadji's centre composed of the Hindustanis.

After the usual light skirmishes between the rival patrols, the battle started about nine in the morning with a mutual cannonade which did more injury to the Marathas, because their guns, dragged from a more distant base and across a wide stony river-bed, were lighter than those of the Rajputs, whose camp was close behind. "As the Jaipur guns were larger their balls reached Sindhia's army, and many men and horses were killed; while Sindhia's shots being fired from smaller pieces, did not touch the enemy . . . . . The Jaipur balls were found to weigh from five to fourteen *seers*." On hearing of it, Mahadji ordered four large guns to be taken to Rana Khan.

A little before 11 o'clock the distant cannonade ceased, as if by mutual consent. Then a tumultuous shout was heard on the enemy's right, and through the smoke screen burst four

thousand Rathor horsemen at the gallop. These desperadoes, after taking a last lingering pull at their pipes of opium, drew their swords and charged the Maratha left with wild cries of "Hān! Hān! Kill them! Kill them!" The Maratha batteries ploughed through their dense ranks, opening bloody lanes at each discharge. But heedless of their comrades who fell, the survivors swept up to the Maratha guns, sabred the gunners, and still advancing fell upon the supporting infantry. Their terrific impact broke the first line of the Maratha left wing; hundreds of Nagas and Afghan troops were slain, and even De Boigne's sepoys after firing a few volleys were forced back in confusion along with their Maratha comrades. The cool Savoyard led his disordered ranks obliquely to the rear, formed the survivors again and reopened small arm fire, but "the Rathors heeded it not."

Rana Khan promptly sent up reinforcements of Maratha horse under Shivaji Vital (Bapu), Rayaji Patil and Khanderao Hari (Apa), who rallied the fugitives and renewed the combat. The bloodiest and most obstinate struggle of the day raged here. The situation at one time became so critical that the sons of Murtaza Khan Barech dismounted and fought on foot, which is the last expedient of Indian warriors when driven to bay. By this time the Rathor charge had spent all its force; no infantry came up from behind to support it and consolidate its gains; and when at

last more guns arrived against them from the Maratha reserve, the Rathors were driven back, but not before they had inflicted over 300 casualties, including Ghāzi Khan (brother of Murtaza Khan), Shambhuji Patil, and one jamadar slain and Malhar Rao Pawār, Chimnāji Khanderao (Shivaji Vital's diwan), the nephew of Shivaji Vital and one jamadar wounded. For this the Rajputs had to pay a heavy price, suffering over one thousand casualties, high officers like Shovārām Bhāndāri and Bhim Singh Bakhshi's brother-in-law, besides a score of lower officers being slain. [*DY*. i. 224. *MD*. ii. 147. *PRC*. i. 135, 137. *HP*. 503. *Akh*.]

But the greatest loss to the Rajput cause was the death of Muhammad Beg Hamadani, which broke the spine of their offensive power. This general, the most famous Muslim warrior then living in Northern India, had sent his retainers on to attack the Maratha right wing while he stood on an elephant in the shade of a tree watching them from behind. A cannon-ball struck the tree above and rebounding knocked him down to the ground tearing one side of his body open ; then the branch broken by the shot fell down crushing him underneath. His advancing troops, ignorant of his fate, shook the Maratha right wing and penetrated to their baggage, but were repulsed by the Deccani horse hurried up from the reserve by Rana Khan.

The Rathors during the rest of the day made three or four advances as if to fall on the Maratha guns again, but found no opportunity of carrying out the design. The Mughalias, deprived of their chief, did not stir again. After repulsing the first two enemy attacks, Sindhia's army stood on the defensive, the Maratha portion of it quaking in fear lest at the first successful break through by the Rajputs their treacherous Hindustani comrades should join the enemy and turn their guns upon Mahadji's own men! But the traitors got no opportunity for doing so, thanks to the successful defence by Rayaji Patil and others. [*HP*. 503.] In fact, after the first hour's close tussle, the moves of the Rajputs became spasmodic and lacked vigour ; the Maratha line held firmly, their men breathed freely, their wounded were transported to the rear tents in the *palkis* which had been promptly sent up by the considerate and ever-watchful Mahadji, and their munition supply was replenished by the same alert leader. But there was no further advance on the Maratha side, partly because Hamadani's death was not known to them until the night, and partly because it began to rain in the afternoon, making that sandy plain difficult for artillery movement, and the Marathas were afraid of the ravines in front, the on-coming darkness and the lack of wells in that tract. So, each side fell back to its camp and resorted to random firing till an hour after sunset in order to guard against a surprise attack in the

darkness. Thus the battle of Tunga,—miscalled that of Lalsot,—"though sanguinary, had no decisive result." [De Boigne, *Carriere,* p. 68.]

§ 9. *Criticism of the Lālsot campaign.*

The battle of Tunga has been universally acclaimed by the Rajputs as "an entire victory." Tactically it has no right to that name: the Rajputs delivered successive charges on the Maratha force in the field and failed to dislodge them; all their attacks were repulsed, and at the end of the day each side returned to its camp in the rear, as was the usual practice. The day after the battle the Maratha army reappeared on the same field, and even advanced up to gunshot of the Jaipur camp, but none on the opposite side ventured to stir out of their shelter. That is not the sign of a victory. Nor could the Rajputs boast of having taken a single Maratha gun, and their own casualty list was much heavier than that of the Marathas.

And yet it was not a victory for Mahadji either. He had failed to crush the enemy in the field, or to rout them out of their camp. He had not captured any enemy gun. Therefore his offensive must be adjudged a failure. If he was forced to beat a hurried but marvellously well-conducted and safe retreat four days after the battle, it was due not to the threats of the enemy,, but to treachery and dissension in his own ranks and the utter failure of his provisions. Not a

single Rajput general barred his retreat or appeared near enough to exchange blows with his rearguard. The Maratha despatch-writers and Mahadji himself boasted that on the field his army had been victorious. That in one sense they had been ; but the impartial historian must say that, as at Sheriffmuir, so here too "none wan."

Considered in its strategy, the Lalsot campaign as a whole was a failure for Mahadji ; and the failure was due to his lack of a single clear objective steadily pursued, and his blunder in concentrating every available soldier for the field fight, which left his line of communication with Kerauli fatally unprotected and made it impossible for him to spare an adequate escort for the vitally necessary grain convoys. He was truly starved out of Rajputana. For this failure he alone was to blame. He had begun the campaign in the expectation that time was on his side and that the Rajput confederacy would automatically break up if he kept facing it long enough. But such a waiting game presupposed that during that interval of inaction the food supply of his own camp would be assured and his communications with his base near Agra kept open. He had no doubt of the result in an actual clash of arms with the raw feudal levies opposed to him, but how was he to meet his incomparably larger army bill and keep up his munition supply in that distant and backward country? On this point he made a miscalculation and he paid the

price of his mistake by one full year of loss of power and fame. Indeed, his clearness of vision, unfailing sense of reality and practical skill seem to have deserted him from the commencement of May 1787, otherwise how could such a veteran leader forget that a modern army marches on its stomach?

§ 10. *Mutiny of Sindhia's Hindustani troops; his critical position.*

On the day of the battle Mahadji Sindhia was up and doing for twenty-one hours without a respite, and it was only at one o'clock of the next morning, after all his troops had come back to their respective positions and his generals had reported that all was quiet on the front, that he could lay his head down to sleep. Daylight brought no relief to the anxieties of the chieftain, but rather added to them. True, there was no fighting on that day (the 29th of July); his army under Rana Khan marched in full equipment to yesterday's battlefield and even two miles further, to the edge of the Jaipur camp; but the Rajputs did not venture to take up the challenge by coming out of their trenches, they merely stood on the defensive. In the evening a letter was received from the Kachhwa Rajah begging for a two days' truce for the funeral of Muhammad Beg Hamadāni and other slain warriors and promising to be ready for fight on the 31st.

But within Mahadji's own camp the situation now became intolerable. After the battle of Tungā with its heavy casualties in men and horses, his unpaid and starving soldiery could no longer be kept in hand. He had distributed three camel-loads of Rupees and some badges of honour among them as reward, besides Rs. 25,000 for buying sweetmeats. But such a small sum when divided among that vast horde was a mockery,—each soldier getting only the price of two days' rations and no part of his pay at all. All the commandants came to Sindhia and pointed out that it was impossible to keep their men with the colours unless they were paid their arrears. But Sindhia had not the necessary money with him, and would not part with what little he had.

The inevitable outburst came on the 30th. That day news arrived that a grain convoy of 6,000 pack-oxen and 700 camels coming from the Kerauli side *viâ* Khush-hal-garh had been cut off by the Rajputs owing to the negligence and cowardice of the escort, a thousand Deccani horse and foot. The Jaipur Rajah's Dāi-bhāi (wet nurse's son) blocked the eastern road from Khush-hal-garh, while Rodā Rām Khawās closed the southern route from Ranthambhor. The coming of provisions to Mahadji's camp now totally ceased. "A Rupee could not buy even four lbs. of flour or six lbs. of *dāl*. All the troops, especially the sepoy battalions, clamoured

for their pay. Mons. Lesteneau came to Mahadji and reported that the Mughalia troops who had previously gone over to the Jaipur side were seducing his sepoys by promising to pay up their dues from the Jaipur treasury. Mahadji at first did not pay heed to his words." [*Ibr.* iii. 26.]

But the matter soon passed out of his hands. All the trained sepoy battalions took up arms, placed their officers under arrest, and with guns limbered up threatened to march on Mahadji's tent and extort their dues by force. Rana Khan advised a prompt settlement of their claims, but Sindhia replied, "If I pay the salary of the Telingas today, then the Hindustanis tomorrow and the Deccani horse the next day will ask for their dues. Six* lakhs is what their monthly salary amounts to." But more alarming news came from the Jaipur camp and at last Sindhia bowed to necessity. He offered two months' pay; but it was now too late. The sepoys and gunners replied that their salary was due for eight months and flour was selling at four seers to the Rupee, so that they were too weak from fasting to hold their muskets; that they must be paid all their arrear dues in full and for the future four annas a day in cash, or else they would go over to the Jaipur Rajah. Throughout the 30th and the forenoon of the next day the tumult raged unabated in his camp. Sindhia

* *Akh.* SJ. ms. 47, has "sixty lakhs per mensem," evidently a copyist's error for "six lakhs."

was utterly distracted; all his attempts to placate the soldiery, even by making his wife security for his good faith, failed. The exasperated sepoys abused and sent back his peace envoys. They refused the jewels that he offered, saying that they could not feed on gems, but wanted cash. Some regiments, however, accepted part payment, such as the gunners (Rs. 2,900), Lesteneau's battalions (Rs. 1,000) and Murtaza Khan's sons (Rs. 10,000.) [*Akh.* 47.]

But one body of 7,000 men obstinately refused. They marched off at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 31st with all their muskets, 125 pieces of artillery, and all their munition carts, —forming squares and placing their baggage in the centre. When they reached the bank of the Morel and halted, Ismail Beg and Malik Md. Khan advanced from the Jaipur army, welcomed them, paid Rs. 30,000 down and promised one lakh more in two days' time, and led them across the river to the Rajah's camp. True, Mahadji thus lost only 7,000 sepoy musketeers and artilleryists, while more than that number of trained Hindustani soldiers still remained under his banners through the personal influence of Lesteneau, Levassoult and Jean Baptiste de la Fontaine. But in the council of war held that evening, all his generals told Sindhia that in future no Hindustani soldier could be trusted and that in such circumstances he must avoid a battle by all means, lest during the engagement

with the enemy intestine fighting should break out between the two sections of his army and "the result would be another Panipat." Mahadji decided to wait and see. [*HP*. 503.]

Shortly after nightfall a loud report of all the guns was heard to proceed from the deserters' camp. The hearts of the Marathas were chilled with the fear that these men were coming with their Rajput allies to deliver a night attack. Mahadji himself rode immediately to the front to reconnoitre, but his spies soon brought the reassuring news that the noise was that of a salute fired by the deserters in honour of the Rajah of Jaipur who had paid them a visit.

What was Mahadji to do now? An attack by the combined forces of the Rajputs, the Mughalias and the recently deserted sepoys with their superior artillery and overflowing munition-chests, was reasonably expected next morning. Could he meet it with his depleted and partly disloyal forces? All his generals agreed that resistance was hopeless; "the time resembles that of Panipat. If the enemy advance we are sure to perish. They have been emboldened, our own men have been correspondingly disheartened; the paltans and Mughalia troops still with us are unreliable. The Deccani horse in this army is small in number. Grain is selling at four seers to the Rupee, and no provision is coming from outside. Many of our horses have perished, and those that remain have no strength left in

them. On the strength of what shall we fight?" [*Ibr.* iii. 19. *HP.* 503. *Akh. PRC.* i.] Hence a retreat was decided upon.

§ 11. *The retreat from Lalsot, 1-9 Aug. 1787.*

Three hours before the dawn of 1st August, the retreat began,* in the same well-planned and orderly manner as during the advance to Tungā, but with the positions reversed: the vanguard under Rānā Khan now became the rearguard; and the main baggage camp with the women and other impedimenta turned its face round and became the front portion of the moving army; Mahadji, as usual, commanded the middle of this long line, keeping constant touch with all the divisions and rendering support and restoring order wherever the need for it arose. If his late march to the enemy's encampment, conducted for successive days without any accident or loss, had been a masterly act of military genius, his present success in leading a dispirited army back to safety from the face of a superior and exultant enemy must excite our highest admiration for his cool calculating generalship, his eternal vigilance and his tireless exertion under appalling difficulties. Leaving the Ramgarh plain on the 1st of August,

* Mahadji's retreat from Lalsot.—*Akhbarat*, SJ. ms. (best and fullest), 51-73. *PRC.* i. 137,, 142-144, 151-156. *HP.* 503. Muna Lal (present), 310-311. *Ibr.* iii. 31-33.

he grimly held on to his purpose, declined to be drawn into side engagements, and by making long marches daily, arrived in safety near Dig on the 8th day. No other Indian leader of that age could have accomplished such a feat.

This retreat was a movement of unspeakable terror, privation and daily alarms to the rank and file of his army. Throughout the ten days following the battle of Tungā, the phantom of Pānipat kept haunting the memory of every Deccani in his camp. But if Lālsot did not prove a second Pānipat, it was because Mahadji Sindhia was no Sadāshiv Rāo Bhāu and he was better served than that hero of the Chitpavan tragedy.

It was still three hours to day-break on the 1st of August when Mahadji sent off camel riders to his baggage camp, south of Lālsot village, some eight miles behind the battle front, to warn the women, transport officers and guards there to pack up and begin their march immediately, so as to leave the road unencumbered for the main army coming up from behind. In his own camp near Rāmgarh the news spread quickly that a retreat had been ordered, and the soldiers and camp followers started in feverish haste to make preparations for moving off. Mahadji and Rānā Khan remained behind to stem any Rajput attack and sent the field camp and artillery on towards the base under escort of the light division, after burning some tumbrils which had stuck fast in the

mud and abandoning a good deal of baggage for lack of transport*

When the light division joined the base camp, it was almost dawn, and a busy and confused scene of packing, clamouring and running about for transport opened at once. In the midst of it, a powder chest caught fire, evidently through accident, though a Maratha news-writer reported it as a wilful act of treachery by a Hindustani sepoy. The explosion caused the blaze and roar of a gun fire, killing and wounding ten men and some bullocks. The people in the distant parts of that vast encampment, on hearing the report, shouted out that the North Indian battalions still with Sindhia had turned their guns on their southern comrades. They began to flee in a panic; those whose property was already loaded took it with themselves, those who were not ready fled away for bare life abandoning their baggage. A wild rumour was spread by the fugitives that a disastrous battle had begun and that Mahadji

* Sindhia kept a body of men posted in the pass of Lalsot. Seventeen guns, 10 to 12 thousand horse and the battalions of De Boigne and Lesteneau were left with Rana Khan and Ambaji for guarding the rear. He himself mounted a horse and marched to the rear at three hours before dawn. In the morning he stood on the Dungar [of Lalsot] when spies reported that the Jaipur army had come out for fighting, but Rana Khan, with his troops in battle formation, was retreating step by step. After coming three *kos* away, he halted and swore, 'If I live I shall reduce Jainagar and Jodhpur to dust.' [*Akh.* SJ. ms. 52-53.]

himself had been slain. Seizing this opportunity, the camp ruffians and licensed Pindharis looted one section of the bazar and the area of Afrasiyab Khan's widow's halting place.

But two hours later, Mahadji himself arrived on the scene. He stopped there for some hours, quickly restored order, and "loading his cooking pots and carpets (abandoned by their bearers) on the camels of his camel-swivel guns, he ordered his soldiers to take as much of the general camp property as they could personally carry and collect and set fire to the rest. . . . The tents also were burnt." [*HP*. 503.] Then marching steadily on and keeping strict control over the middle division of his army, he reached two miles beyond Piplai at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, after a strenuous march of 24 miles for himself and 32 miles for his rearmost division, which was brought up in admirable order by Rana Khan, retreating slowly in battle formation with loaded artillery for repelling any enemy attack, and reached the halting ground two hours after dusk without the least loss. The enemy durst not molest its march.

Next day a serious question arose. News came that the fort of Khush-hal-garh, ahead of them and midway on the road to the friendly State of Kerauli, had been taken by the Jaipur Raja's foster-brother. The Maratha collector posted there had fled away abandoning the two guns, carpets and other stores that Sindhia had

deposited in it, and the enemy now dominated the road to this stronghold. Mahadji, therefore, swerved to the left, *i.e.*, north-eastwards, making Dig his objective. The Rajputs occupied Lalsot and its hill and even reached Piplai the day after the Marathas had left it, but advanced no further, though rumours used to rise daily in the Maratha camp that they were coming. By way of Bāmniwās, Sakrauda, Bhasāwar, and Pathenā, he reached Thun, 14 miles south-west of Dig on the 8th of the month and finally moved on to Siswārā (eight miles nearer to Dig) on the 11th, where he halted in order to gain breathing time and rearrange his affairs.*

His movement towards Dig, instead of towards his own dominion of Gwalior south of the Chambal, was prompted by his wish to safeguard his family which had been left behind in Dig and his son-in-law, Ladoji Deshmukh, who was stationed at Delhi as his deputy. On the 10th his wife and children joined him at Thun, and next day they departed for Gwalior with a

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* Mahadji's route—Starts from plain of Ramgarh,—Bamniwas, 4 m. n. of Piplai (1 Aug.)—Wazirpur, 20 m. e. of Bamniwas and 8 m. e. of Udai (2nd)—Sakrauda, 12 m. n. e. of Wazirpur and 2 m. s.w. of Hindaun (3rd)—Talchiri, 12 m. n. of Hindaun (4th)—Bhaswar, 10 m. n. of Talchiri (5th)—Pathena, 7 m. n. of Bhaswar and 26 m. s.w. of Dig (6th)—Khera Medah, 12 m. n. of Pathena (7th)—Thun, 14 m. s.w. of Dig (8th)—Siswara, 8 m. n. e. of Thun (11th) *Akh.* SJ.ms. and *PRC.* i.

detachment under Apa Khande Rao, accompanied by all the artillery except twelve pieces, the heavy baggage of his army and the females of all the Deccani commanders and troops present in the North. Thus lightening himself, Mahadji turned to his work as a soldier for restoring his power and prestige which had now suffered a total eclipse.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE ECLIPSE OF MAHADJI SINDHIA

§ 1. *Course of events during Mahadji's loss of the Regency of the Empire.*

When Muhammad Beg Hamadāni with his powerful army joined the enemies of Mahadji Sindhia (on 25th May, 1787) and that Maratha chief beat a hurried retreat from Jaipur territory, the news of it at once shivered his newly built and ill-knit dominion into a hundred fragments. A world of enemies raised their heads against him ;—rivals for his position as imperial Regent, heirs of old houses whom he had dispossessed, Hindustani officers whose vast alienations of Crownlands (worth 70 lakhs of Rupees a year) he had taken back, greedy old courtiers whose perquisites and corrupt influence he had curbed, and the entire North Indian Muslim society to whom the regency of a Hindu was an abomination.

The future at this time looked utterly dark and menacing to him. But amidst the distraction caused by reverses on every side and the total absence of friends and resources in every direction in which he cast his eyes, Mahadji always nursed in his heart the two objects of keeping the regency of the Empire and of punishing the Jaipur and Jodhpur Rajahs for the damage done

to his prestige. To one determination he held firmly throughout: he would not cut his losses and retire to the south, abandoning his north Indian ambitions altogether and contenting himself with the district of Gwalior which he had won from the Gohad chief four years earlier. He was a strong-willed reserved man, whose inner mind even his four intimate counsellors could not correctly fathom ; he gave his ear to them but not his tongue. Hence the amazing reports sent off by the professional news-writers in his camp, that Mahadji was utterly bewildered and changing his mind from day to day. Not so ; he was not a man to wear his heart upon his sleeve for the chattering jays of the hand-written press to peck at.

In the light of the large mass of minute contemporary records and almost day to day letters from himself, his officers and observers near him preserved in the Marathi, Persian and English languages, it is now possible to see a clear thoughtful planning and a sustained consistency in his policy, with the necessary variety and flexibility in the choice of means from the day of his retreat from Lalsot to the day fourteen months later when Delhi was reoccupied in his name. A sketch of this period, if given here in outline, will save the reader from the distraction of details and the cross-currents of four or five episodal events that filled the interval.

The eclipse of Mahadji Sindhia began at the end of May 1787 when he hurried back from the Jaipur kingdom towards his base at Dig, and it was completed on the 1st of August when he retreated from Lalsot The tide turned decisively in his favour after 17th June 1788, when under the walls of Agra he destroyed Ismail Beg's army as a fighting force. Although he took three months and a half more to re-occupy Delhi, yet after that 17th of June all people knew that Sindhia had become master again and they hastened to make terms with him. But alas! during this interval of fifteen weeks the Delhi royal family was laid in the dust and the veil of divinity that hedged them in was torn asunder by the rude hands of Afghan spoilers. It was a tragedy of even greater poignancy than the downfall of the French monarchy five years later.

When Sindhia turned his back on Lālsot his first care was to reach a place of safety and withdraw his family and those of his Deccani officers from Dig and then send then home. Along with the women he removed to Gwalior his artillery, camp and heavy baggage, and he also disbanded his Hindustani troops and trained sepoy battalions (except a few). Thus lightening himself, he turned aside to the west, in order to interpose between the advancing Rajput army now strengthened by the adhesion of the Mughalia troops and the city of Delhi on the east. His aim was to preserve contact with the imperial capital

and safeguard his son-in-law Lādoji Deshmukh Shitolé who represented him at Court as Deputy Regent. But the matter was taken out of his hands by the impetuosity of Ghulām Qādir and the cowardice of Lādoji. At the approach of this Ruhela chief, Sindhia's agents fled away from Delhi (24th August) and Ghulām Qādir was admitted to the presence and was appointed Mir Bakhshi and Regent (*vice* Sindhia) by the frightened Sovereign (5th September.) Before this dismissal, Mahadji had decided to support his sole ally the Rao Rajah of Macheri by his presence and to strengthen himself by that Rajah's resources as the only means of preventing a Jaipur advance to Delhi. With the loyal and unstinted aid of the Rao Rajah, he lived at Alwar from 24th August to 2nd November, and thereafter came to Rewāri, at the urgent call of the Emperor, whose palace Ghulām Qādir had begun to bombard.

During this period Sindhia suffered heavy losses: Agra *city* fell to Ismail Beg on 16th September, Ajmer city to the Jodhpur Rajah on 27th August, the whole of the Doab was lost, and only the fort of Aligarh held out, to fall eventually on the 17th of February next year. While Ismail Beg's siege of Agra *fort* was going on, a further threat to Sindhia's power appeared in the person of Prince Jawān Bakht (Jahāndār Shāh) who came out of his asylum at Benares and reached Agra at the beginning of November. But he had no men

or money, the English would not and the Nawab of Oudh could not help him in a war against Sindhia ; and his own haughty irascible character, even more than the clash betwen their personal ambitions, made him quarrel with Ismail Beg, and the baffled heir to the throne at last went back to British territory (arriving at Farrukhabad about 23rd Feb. 1788). His adventure achieved no other result than to give a good fright to Sindhia and help in pushing that chief beyond the Chambal.

From the Rewāri district Mahadji made a vain attempt to bring the Emperor over to his own side by sending Ambāji Inglé on an embassy to Delhi (14th Nov.) and another equally futile effort to raise Ismail Beg's siege of Agra (15-18 Dec.) At last, abandoning all field operations north of the Chambal, Mahadji retired beyond that river (20th Dec.) and encamped on the south bank of the Kumāri brook, 28 miles north of his stronghold of Gwalior. He had now no Maratha force in the north, execept those shut up in Agra and Aligarh.

During the three months of his total exclusion from the north (20 Dec.—16 March 1788), Mahadji wisely devoted his resources to crushing the rebels and raiders in Malwa and the Rajput border land and thus set his hands free for taking a fresh initiative in the north. During this period also the Emperor led an expedition to Rewāri, met the Jaipur Rajah (3 Feb.), fought the

refractory Najaf Quli Khan (12 March) and came back to Delhi on 23rd March after patching up a nominal peace with that powerful rebel. Early in April next began the new Maratha offensive in Hindustan. Fresh troops having come from the Deccan homeland, Rānā Khan was sent with them across the Chambal (4 April) and joined his constant ally, Ranjit Singh the Jat Rajah of Bharatpur.

By admirably planned tactics and exactly timed movements, this general gave Ismail Beg the slip, surprised the siege trenches before Agra, and provisioned the fort with lightning rapidity (9 April). While Rānā Khan hovered round Agra, cutting off Ismail's provisions in spite of many reverses in open actions, Devji Golé and Rayaji Patil recovered the Mathura district and then crossed into the Doab, convulsed Ghulām Qādir's dominions there, and stopped the coming of provisions to the besiegers of Agra. This strategy enforced a separation between Ismail and his ally Ghulām Qādir, as the latter hurried back from Agra to the Doab to defend his own estates; and then Rānā Khan, instantly seizing the isolation and weakness of Ismail Beg, inflicted a decisive defeat on him (17th June.) The country west of the Jamuna was now cleared of Sindhia's enemies, and that Chieftain himself advanced from the Gwalior side to Mathura (4th July.) But he could not recover Delhi till three months afterwards, during which interval Ghulām Qādir

sacked Delhi and blinded the Emperor. Sindhia's agents effected the unhappy sovereign's restoration (the *khutba* being read in Shah Alam's name again on 17th October 1788), and Ghulām Qādir was captured on 18th December and done to death in March next. There was none left now to dispute Sindhia's supremacy.

The main incidents of these fourteen months were four, namely the obstinate struggle of Mahadji with Ismail Beg Hamadāni, the meteoric rise and fall of Ghulām Qādir Ruhela, Shah Alam's campaign against the rebel Najaf Quli Khan, and the adventure of Prince Jawan Bakht which ended in utter futility. The activities of the Rajput Rajahs, the two Gosain brothers, and other petty adversaries counted only as minor episodes.

§ 2. *Mahadji Sindhia's changes of policy and measures during the eclipse of his power: estimate of his forces, money and allies.*

Having thus briefly surveyed the course of events during Mahadji Sindhia's loss of control over northern affairs, we shall study his policy and resources during the same troubled period. First of all, from his halting place near Dig he sent off to Malwa the families of his Deccani officers along with his own wives and children and all his heavy artillery, tents and surplus baggage. At the same time he bade his camp-followers and other non-

combatants go away wherever they could find their bread, so that quite two-thirds of this vast horde left him [on 11th August. *Akh.* SJ. ms 74.] As for his troops he firmly refused to throw away his good money on the faithless Hindustanis still with him, though he owed them nearly a year's pay; he would spend the money more usefully on the fresh and reliable troops expected from the Deccan. The Hindustanis were offered a small daily subsistence, but the discharge of their arrears was made conditional upon the conquest of Jaipur! Their captains were offered jāgirs instead of money, in full clearance of their dues, but only in the Doab tracts of which he had been recently robbed and which they must reconquer from the usurpers. In fact Mahadji was deliberately working for the departure of these disloyal and useless troops from his army in disgust at his insolvency and the famine prices then raging; he said that their covert treason and passive conduct had led to the failure of his Lālsot campaign, and he would therefore pay cash to none but the Deccanis. [*Akh.*]

But he also felt that the Deccani troops then with him, though thoroughly loyal, had grown stale by eight years' continuous absence from home and campaigning in north India ever since he had come to Malwa in 1780 to oppose Col. Camac, and that no great work could be got out of them; for that he must wait for the arrival of fresh troops from Maharashtra. For such fresh

and faithful instruments he had written pressingly to the Peshwa, and indeed to every possible helper, including small men like Beni Hazuri, Dhokal Singh and others who were asked to send even a thousand men each. And he was daily scanning the southern horizon for signs of the approach of these reinforcements, like India's thirsty bird looking out for the rain cloud, as a Marathi letter poetically expresses it.

But where he had most right to hope, he was most cruelly disappointed. The wise young Peshwa Madhav Rao II felt a generous impulse to support his hard-pressed general in the north and proposed to send a large army there under Hari Pant Phadké, the best Maratha general then in the south. But *his* Peshwa, the cold calculating Nana Fadnis, whispered that Phadké would never consent to serve under Sindhia. Chitpavan Brahmanic pride would not stoop to taking orders from a man of the Maraté caste. The Puna Government had neither the will nor the money necessary for backing Mahadji in his hour of need. Ali Bahadur, an illegitimate grandson of Baji Rao I, was then chosen to lead the proposed reinforcements, which Tukoji Holkar was ordered to join on the way. The man was utterly incompetent and had no heart for his work. Nor, indeed, had any of the Puna soldiers. They remembered how, 28 years before, a gallant army had been sent forth from Maharashtra to retrieve the disaster to a Sindhia in the north and that it had

only fed the vultures and jackals on Panipat's plain, and here was a call from another Sindhia in distress in the same far-off land of evil omen. Their captains were in no greater hurry to go than their politicians were to send them. Ali Bahadur took the auspices for his march by entering his campaigning tents on 8th September, 1787, but he joined Sindhia fully fourteen months later (6th Nov. 1788), at a time when Sindhia had made himself master again unaided by a single horseman in the Peshwa's pay.* The other Puna agent, Tukoji Holkar, proved a positive hindrance and intrigued against Mahadji everywhere on the way.

Equally complete, but far more straightforward and prompt, was the disappointment that Sindhia met with in his appeal for armed aid to the English, his allies by the treaty of Salbye. Lord Cornwallis clearly informed him of the Court of Directors' order to the Governor General to observe strict neutrality in the quarrels of the native Powers.

But a body of new Maratha troops which had been raised for him by his devoted agents at Jāmbgāon (about 5,000 men) did join him near Gwalior in March 1788 and these helped to turn

* *HP*. 509. Sat. i. 126. The causes of the delay at Puna, in Sat. i. 126 and also *PRC*. i. 203, 204 and ii.

the scale against his Mughalia enemies.* De Boigne's two battalions remained faithful and rendered him the most effective service in this period of trial. And so also, but in a lesser degree and less consistently, did Lesteneau with his two battalions, except for the six months (middle of September 1787 to middle of March 1788) during which the latter mercenary parted from Sindhia on failing to obtain pay for his men.

After the retreat from Lalsot, as throughout the preceding campaign, Mahadji's worst troubles were caused by his want of money. He had exhausted his cash and credit alike, and his seemingly vast dominions in Hindustan were yielding no revenue. This insolvency subjected him to daily humiliations after the retreat from Lalsot. On 14th August, "His funds being exhausted, when the envoys of his soldiers became most insistent for payment, he placed the ornaments of his wives before his court and said, 'This is the *jāidād* that I have.' Rana Khan remarked, 'What will this quantity amount to?'" [*Akh.* SJ. ms. 83.]

But money did gradually reach Sindhia. "His courtiers raised a loan of thirteen lakhs on their personal security for his use." Rānā Khān and other sardars placed their gold and silver

* On 8th Feb. 1788, Palmer wrote from Sindhia's camp, "The troops which he ordered from Burhanpur for the protection of Malwa, have totally defeated the Udaipurians. [*PRC.* i. 202.]

ware at his feet, and these were sent to Vrindāvan to be melted into coins. [August 1787. *Akh.* SJ. ms. 83, 86.] So also was the silver plate in Mahadji's palace of Ujjain which was converted into seven lakhs of Rupees. [*MD.* ii. 154; earlier remittance from Ujjain, in Oct. *Akh.* 243.] The Alwar Rajah furnished seven lakhs (in August 1787),—one lakh being advanced by himself and six lakhs from the local bankers. [*Akh.* 116.] Sindhia had already run into heavy debt to Ahalyā Bāi Holkar during his campaigns in Gohad, and he durst not ask her for any large loan now. Nānā Fadnis by his personal influence induced the Puna bankers to promise Sindhia a loan of five lakhs, but refused another five lakhs which Mahadji had begged from the Peshwa's Government as a subsidy; and even this bankers' loan did not reach Sindhia by the end of October. [*HP.* 509.]

In January 1788, however, after his vigorous suppression of disorder in Malwa, his actual revenue collection increased to 12 lakhs or more. [*PRC.* i. 196, 201.] Through his agent at Jāmbgāon he received a loan from the Deccan early in March next. [*HP.* 516.]

Thus in the course of time Mahadji gained financial relief, and in consequence of it a decisive increase of his military strength. But at first he was almost driven mad by bankruptcy and the crowding of enemies on all sides. Of

these enemies the most harmful, because of their large forces and strong will, were Ismail Beg Hamadāni at the head of the old Mughalia party and Ghulām Qādir Khan (the son of Zābita Khan) at the head of a Ruhela army assembled from Ghausgarh and Rohilkhand alike. A third enemy, Najaf Quli Khan, contended himself with carving out a principality for himself in the Rewari-Narnol-Kanud region at the expense of the Rao Rajah, but his indolent pleasure-loving character rendered the danger from him to Sindhia's power almost negligible. The Jaipur Rajah, pushed from behind by the Jodhpur commander Bhimrāj Bakhshi, had been the fountain and origin of Sindhia's troubles, but he quickly took a secondary place or sank into quiescence. He had no wish to trouble the Marathas if they did not trouble him by pressing for the arrears of his tribute, —his sole aim being to preserve his own patrimony, which necessarily involved the wresting back of every bit of land robbed from him by his disloyal vassal of Macheri. But beyond his own borders he would not march; he would not molest Mahadji's retreat from Lālsot (which was a welcome riddance to the Kachhwa State); and he had no quarrel with the Peshwā, to whom he appealed, as a family friend since the days of the great Shivaji and Mirzā Rajah Jai Singh I, to stop Sindhia's aggressions. [*Akh. SJ.* ms. 51. *Ibr.* iii. 21.]

§ 3. *Sindhia's contest with Ismail Beg: its first stage, Marathas expelled from the North.*

We shall first of all deal with the most decisive contest waged by Mahadji during the eclipse of his power. As soon as the Maratha army fell back from Lālsot, the Jaipur Rajah advanced to his north-eastern frontier and set about reducing the forts of the Narukā Rao Rajah, instead of pursuing Sindhia and driving him altogether beyond the Chambal. At this Ismail Beg and other Mughalia sardars who had joined him were discontented, as their aim was to create large estates for their own selves out of the territory once held by Mirza Najaf Khan as Mir Bakhshi. Moreover, their promised salary could not be paid out of the exhausted Jaipur treasury and a rupture took place when the Rajah tried to take away the artillery of the Telingas who had come over to his side after the battle of Tungā. [*Ibr.* iii. 21. *Akh.* 58, 63.]

Faced with a hopeless future in the Jaipur service, Ismail Beg, Malik Muhammad Khan and other Mughalias left the Rajah's camp and marched away towards Agra, to the immense relief of the Rajputs. In addition to their Mughalia horse they had with them three battalions of sepoys and sixty guns, several of which were of large calibre. Against them Mahadji could only send Rayaji Patil with a party of Maratha light horse but no guns and no trained musketeers. In purging his army of treason near

Dig he had got rid of all the Telingas and Hindustani sepoys, except four battalions under De Boigne and Lesteneau, and sent away to Malwa all his large guns, keeping only four of these and some lighter pieces. The lesson of Panipat had not been lost on him; if he chose to follow raiding tactics (*ghanimi*), he must not encumber himself with slow and heavy artillery. His striking force was now composed entirely of Maratha spearmen mounted on ponies. [*Akh.* 88. *HP.* 504.]

Ismail Beg easily brushed aside the opposition of Rayaji Patil by means of his gun-fire and musketry action (11—15 Sep.) and arrived close to Agra. On the 16th, Lakhwā Dādā Lād, the governor of the fort, made a sortie with his Deccani horse and two battalions of sepoys led by Lesteneau, and gave battle to Ismail Beg Khan, while Rāyāji Patil fell on the Khan's rear and at first gained some success. But Lesteneau's troops had been exasperated by their salary remaining long unpaid and merely evasive replies being given by Mahadji Sindhia to their commandant's entreaty and warning. So, during this engagement they turned their muskets on their Maratha brethren in arms, and Ismail Beg, taking advantage of the confusion, made a vigorous advance. The Hindustani soldiers living in Agra opened the gates of that *city* to him and he captured it without resistance. The defeated Rāyāji galloped away towards the friendly base

of Bharatpur ; Lakhwā Dādā was cut off from his charge but contrived to re-enter the fort next day ; Lesteneau joined Ismail Beg and was granted some jagirs in the north Agra district in lieu of pay. The *fort* of Agra, however, successfully defied the Muslims for nine months, under its exceptionally able and enterprising *qiladar* Lakhwā Dādā, till his master gained the upper hand again in June 1788.*

The capture of Agra city was a great blow to Mahadji and a great gain to his enemies. Under the late Jat and Maratha rule this place had become the richest and most flourishing city in the Mughal empire and the residence of many rich or noble families as a safer place of refuge than ever-troubled Delhi. The conqueror now squeezed the inmates mercilessly in his pressing need. The city escaped a general sack by paying Rs. 35,000, but the houses of Naubat Rai (Mahadji's manager) and Narayandas (Afrasiyab Khan's diwān) were seized and dug up for treasure, yielding over three lakhs in cash and kind. With this money, Ismail refreshed his famished and ragged troops and began to enlist new men, till a force of over 20,000 was assembled under his banners. [*DY*. i. 286.]

For a month and a half after this battle there was a lull on both sides. Sindhia was utterly

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* Ismail Beg captures Agra city.—*H.P.* 504. *PRC.* i. 177, 178. *DY*. i. 286. *Ibr.* iii. 22. His exactions, G. Ali ii. 258.

confounded by the gathering of enemies on all sides, while his own forces numbered less than 15,000, mostly light cavalry with De Boigne's battalions now fallen to a thousand bayonets or less, and he could see no aid coming from any quarter.

At the end of October, Mahadji was forced into action. His general Ambāji Inglé (with 8,000 horse and foot) had been sent on a raiding campaign into Jaipur territory in order to create a diversion; in this he failed and also in his attempt to wrest Ajmer *city* which had been captured from the Marathas by the Jodhpur Rajah on 27th August. In the end Ambaji was surprised, severely defeated and forced to flee to his master's side at Alwar, with the loss of his baggage. [*Ibr.* iii. 53. *Akh.* 204—237.] Meantime, Ghulām Qādir Khan's audacious attack on Delhi (16th Oct.) drove the Emperor into making frantic appeals to Sindhia to come to his rescue.

So, leaving Alwar on 28th October, Mahadji arrived between Rewāri and Pataudi (4th Nov.), and here he was brought to a halt for a month. His enemies at Delhi gained complete control over the Emperor and secured an order forbidding him to approach the Court (15th Nov.), and Sindhia could do nothing but wait passively for the longed for reinforcements to arrive. Prince Jawān Bakht (Jahāndār Shāh), eldest son of Shah Alam, left his asylum at Benares to try his hand at recovering his paternal dominions or at carving

out a principaplity for himself. He reached Mathura (*via* Farrukhabad and Jalesar) on 1st November, but after a fruitless journey to Agra for concerted action with Ismail Beg, he broke away from that reluctant ally and went off to Delhi on 8th December. During the prince's alliance with Ismail Beg, Mahadji felt that he must strike a blow for the relief of Agra, or he would be pressed by enemy forces on three sides and expelled beyond the Chambal. Therefore, leaving Rewāri early in December, he moved* towards Sikandra (Agra) where Ismail Beg lay in camp. The Maratha force was inferior to their enemy in number, dispirited by their late reverses, and without any big artillery. But Sindhia made a last desperate attempt: after appealing to his followers' honour, he sent Rana Khan ahead with 10,000 horse. Ismail Beg promptly marched out to the encounter with a strong body of horse and foot and 33 pieces of cannon (on 16th December.) The Maratha horse, vowing to fight bravely, made repeated charges on Hamadani's army and inflicted some loss. But Ismail Beg, forming his men into one dense column, attacked the enemy centre, carrying everything before him by the volume of his fire. At last the Marathas

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* *DY*. i. 235 reports Mahadji Sindhia as present at *Kaul jhil*, 12 *kos* from Agra towards Delhi, on 15th Decr. The only place there with a faintly similar name that I can find in the *Indian Atlas* is *Konraij*, between Dig and Kumbher, with a marsh near it. Campaign in *Ibr*. iii. 70-72.

were repulsed with heavy loss; De Boigne's trained battalions, firing well-directed volleys, formed a defensive shield round Mahadji and safely brought him out of the field. But Lakhwā Dādā had profited by this diversion of the besiegers, to sally out and convey much foodstuff from outside into his fort.

The fugitives from the battle of Sikandra retreated to Dholpur, and were rallied there by Sindhia. Ismail Beg came up close behind, and here a second battle was fought on the 20th of the month. The Marathas offered a gallant defence, but were broken by repeated charges led by Ismail in person. and their case became hopeless when a powder-chest exploded. Then, abandoning all further struggle, they drove their horses into the Chambal and crossed over to Sindhia's own dominions. Their camp and all their baggage were plundered, and their post at Dholpur fort was invested by a detachment of the enemy, while Ismail went back to his camp before Agra fort, and Sindhia retreated beyond the Chambal and the Kumari rivers, to 28 miles north of Gwalior.

The last trace of Maratha authority in Hindustan disappeared after this retreat. Mahadji had now not a single friend north of the Chambal except Ranjit Singh Jat, and no post except two or three which were beleaguered by the enemy.

One disaster followed another: Ajmer *fort** capitulated to Bijay Singh on 24th December without making the least defence. Najaf Quli seized Gokulgarh, Ghulām Qādir captured Khurjā and besieged Mursan and Aligarh, while Anupgir Gosain took Firuzabad.

§ 4. *Second stage of contest: Maratha guerilla activities, but Ismail Beg still dominant.*

But within a week of this retreat, Mahadji had pulled his men together and formed a new and very effective plan of campaign. He now concentrated his available forces in the Gwalior region and set them to subdue his revolted tributaries of Kerauli and Narwār and other places in that province. The new policy began to bear fruit in February. The Rānā of Kerauli was forced to make terms; the rebel chiefs in the

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* Ajmer lost.—The fort was in charge of a brother of Mirza Rahim Beg. Sher Khan jamadar was defending it, but his family lived in the city, below the fort. When the Jodhpur Rajah took the *city* on 27 Aug. almost without a blow,—"Mahadji's subahdar did not fire even for an hour,"—the victors placed piquets on the houses where Sher Khan's wives and children lived, and these latter took poison in fear of being dishonoured. [Sat. i. 120 *Akh*. SJ. ms. 188, 194. *MD*. ii. 154.] For some time Ambaji Inglé and Jivaji Bakhshi fought Rodoji Khawas outside Ajmer city and provisioned the fort, but they were expelled by the Rajputs in October. [*Ibr*. iii. 53. *Akh*. 225, 231—241.] The *fort* fell on 24 Dec., "the qiladar and his wife are dead; the fort did not resist even for a month or fortnight." [*MD*. ii. 154. *PRC*. i. 192.]

Gwalior region were suppressed, and the Udaipuri bands that had violated the Mālwa frontier were defeated by a fresh Maratha force moved up from Burhanpur. The Rāghogarh Rānā's son, after escaping from his prison in Bhilsā, had been disturbing the country, but Rānā Khan reconquered the Khichi State and Mahadji wisely made friends with the Rānā by restoring him to freedom and his dominions, on the promise to pay tribute.* And by the middle of March, Sindhia

* Mahadji, Jan.-March 1788.—*MD.* ii. 161. *PRC.* i. 194—206.

Ibr. iii. 106-107 narrates: When Mahadji crossed the Chambal to Gwalior, he found the atmosphere of that region changed. Territories were seized by the Rajahs of Narwar, Datia, Kerauli, Kota and Udaipur. Rana Chhatra Singh [captive Gohad chief]'s relatives emerged from every lane and troubled the Maratha grantees. . . Sindhia collected himself quickly and sent Rana Kh. with 5,000 men against the Rajah of Narwar, who after some fighting fled into his fort, but soon submitted through lack of provisions and sent Rana Kh. back by paying a fine and restoring the usurped *mahals*. Apa Khanderao chastised the rebels of the Gwalior district. By his order Rana Chhatra Singh was poisoned to death and his body taken out of Gwalior fort and burnt. Mahadji released the Rajah of Raghogarh from prison and sent him back to Raghogarh on his swearing to be loyal and pay tribute regularly in future. Ambaji with a large force suppressed the rebels in the Ujjain district and up to the Mewar frontier. These campaigns restored the *morale* of the Maratha army. [On 23 Feb.] Mahadji himself set out to punish the Rajah of Kerauli, whose capital was besieged, till he begged to make peace through Bapu Vital Rao, paid tribute and ceded the lands he had seized.

was in a position to resume his offensive north of the Chambal.

Sindhia's one true and steady friend was Ranjit Singh, the Jat Rajah, whom he had conciliated by the cession of his ancestral forts and promises of restoration to the glory of Suraj Mal's reign. The instinct of self-preservation made Ranjit Singh, like the Rao Rajah of Macheri,* cling to Mahadji. The avowed aim of Ismail Beg was to recover all the Jat territory that Mirza Najaf Khan had once conquered and thus reduce the Jat kingdom to a petty zamindari, as it had been under Badan Singh. Ranjit had made use of the two months following Sindhia's retreat beyond the Chambal to increase his levy of his brave clansmen and he also took advantage of Ismail Beg's want of money to seduce (through the agency of Shah Nizam-ud-din) his starving and discontented mercenary troops. One of these former deserters from Sindhia, namely, Malik Muhammad Khan, on seeing his jagirs, Koil and Jalesar, seized by Ghulām Qādir Khan and that Ruhela chief now joined to Ismail Beg, left the Beg and came over to Ranjijt Singh,

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* The Rao Rajah of Macheri (Alwar) had appealed to Sindhia thus,—"If you come to my support the ruining of Jaipur would not be difficult. But if your design be otherwise, tell me plainly, so that I being a zamindar only may make terms with the Jaipur Rajah." And again, "By joining the Maharajah [Sindhia] I have made all others my enemies. If he marches away to that side my kingdom would be lost." [*Akh.* SJ. ms. 92, 196.]

along with Mons. Lesteneau (2 battalions) and Jahangir Khan (one battalion), on promise of better payment. "Every day numbers of cavalry and infantry used to leave Ismail and Ghulām Qādir for the Jat camp. Ismail Beg formed a pact with Ghulam Qadir for partitioning the entire Jat country between themselves, as well as the Maratha acquisitions in the north, marking out their respective boundaries beforehand." [*Ibr.* iii. 106.]

The Jat Rajah made a pressing appeal for reinforcements to Mahadji whose hands had been recently freed by his suppression of all the Rajput invaders and local rebels of Malwa and strengthened by the near approach of a body of fresh Deccani troops raised by his agents in Jambgaon (but none of the Peshwa's promised reinforcements.) On 16th March 1688 he despatched a strong body of horse with one battalion of sepoys and a few guns across the Chambal to join the Jats. [*PRC.* i. 208.] The strength of his enemies had been increased by Ghulam Qadir joining Ismail Beg near Agra (c. 24 March.) But the aims of the two chiefs were conflicting, and after a few days the Ruhela went back to the Doab (c. 31 March) in order to press his attack on Firuzabad. But during his short stay in Agra, the Maratha detachment that had crossed the Chambal was driven back with loss across the river after three days' skirmishing (25th-27th March) by a southward advance of Ismail Beg.

[*DC. PRC.* i. 208-210. *Ibr.* iii. 107-108.] This forward movement was a feeler on the part of Mahadji Sindhia, and it failed because the detachment was too small, the Jat Rajah was not prompt enough in uniting with it, and Ismail Beg was too quick in crushing it in its isolated condition.

On 4th April, a much larger, but still light, force was sent across under his ablest general Rānā Khan. It consisted of 10,000 horse and De Boigne's two battalions of musketeers. Hearing of the Maratha advance, Ismail Beg again left a thin screen in the siege trenches before Agra and marched south. At his approach, this Maratha division fell back from Rupbās to Dholpur without venturing on a battle, and the Beg lay encamped at Rupbās and then near Dholpur, watching the ford on the Chambal. Rānā Khan, Rāyāji Patil, Jivā Dāda, and other Maratha generals next made a rapid detour, forded the Chambal unperceived some miles to the west of Dholpur, and being joined by the Jat army on the way turned Ismail Beg's rear and surprised the besiegers of Agra. These last, in their depleted strength could make no resistance ; their commanders, Ismail Beg's old father and Umrāogir Gosāin, had lost heart and were quickly defeated, the Gosāin being carried away as a prisoner and their baggage, horses and elephants plundered (7th April.) The victors fell back on Āchhnerā. [*DY.* i. 233, 285, 298. Sat. i. 132. *HP.* 518, 520. *Ibr.* is confused.]

On hearing of this reverse, Ismail Beg hurried back to Agra, confirmed his pact with Ghulām Qādir, called him to his side with his troops from the Doab, and the two exchanged turbans and dined together in sign of full brotherhood. As agreed before, the two chiefs, masking their siege of Agra fort, set out to conquer Bharatpur. Their combined strength at this time was reported as 12,000 horse, 25,000 infantry and a hundred guns. The Jat and Maratha armies when taken together were numerically as strong; but the Marathas were disheartened by repeated defeats and the brave Jats had no worthy leader; moreover, they were incomparably inferior in field artillery and heavy cavalry. Therefore, the only tactics they could pursue were to circle round the Muslim army at a safe distance and cut off its provisions. This they successfully did for some time. On 19th April the two armies came in contact, and next day at Kiraoli, four miles south of Achhnera, a severe battle was fought with heavy casualties, the slain numbering one thousand and the Jat army losing 12 guns and many standards. The Jats and Marathas fell back on Bharatpur, and the victors advanced to lay siege to that city. The Jat Rajah heartened the Marathas and induced them to continue the struggle. A last battle was fought, at Jaginā, two miles north-east of Bharatpur, on 1st May, which produced no decisive result, though Rānā Khan

received a bullet wound.* The historian Khair-ud-din ascribes the Maratha failure to the treason of their ally Jahāngir Khan, who had joined Ranjit Singh with two battalions and ten guns, and fired only blank charges at Ismail Beg's army, and when Ismail had thus entered his ranks unharmed, Jahāngir opened real fire on the Jats and Marathas advancing behind him. "At last Rānā Khan retreated in the evening, the victors seizing much of his property in the field. But owing to the slaughter of thousands that day, neither side had any strength left for fighting."

§ 5. *Third stage of contest: Ismail Beg's disastrous Jat invasion and consequent Maratha predominance.*

So, Ismail Beg deemed it unwise to attack Bharatpur,† and in company with Ghulām Qādir proceeded to capture Kumbher which was poorly garrisoned and whose defences had been suffered to fall into neglect. The garrison of Kumbher, with no commander of ability or courage to lead them, lost heart after only one afternoon's bombardment and evacuated the fort at night. Next morning (3rd May) the two Khans entered the fort and seized all the property accumulated there since the days of Rajah Suraj Mal. Thousands

* *PRC.* i. 217. *Ibr.* iii. 108-109. *DY.* i. 287.

† *Ibr.* iii. 109-114. *DY.* i. 288, 297. *PRC.* i. 219. G. Ali. iii. 260. ML. 330-331.

of muskets and swords and immense quantities of grain and munitions were thus gained.

Ismail Beg pressed for an attack on Dig before the Jats could recover from the shock of the loss of Kumbher. Leaving their booty in the conquered fort, the two generals marched on Dig. At night Ismail Beg ordered ladders to be made of all the flagstaffs in his army after detaching the colours, in order to deliver an escalade. Arrived at the village of Bhaj two miles east of Dig, the impetuous Hamadāni reconnoitred the fort and ordered an assault that very afternoon. Dismounting his troops, he himself led them on foot, sword and shield in hand. Coming near the fort wall he sat down, utterly exposed, without any shade or tent, and sent his men on to scale the wall. "The scene that followed was like Doomsday. The fire from the walls killed hundreds of the Muslims at that short range and the cannon balls rebounded again and again. On the immediate right and left hands of Ismail Beg, forty men were struck down and a soldier seated at his elbow had his head blown away by a shot. Once the assailants reached the counterscarp and tried to descend into the ditch for climbing the wall opposite. The garrison crowding on the ramparts showered on them shot, bullets, rockets, powder-balls (*huqqa*), large stones, blazing naphtha and logs of wood and brick-bats that came to hand. Hundreds were

slain and thousands wounded; the remnant fled away" (*c.* 18 May.)

At last Ismail Beg retreated from this hopeless attempt. The Maratha and Jat armies, biding their time, now fell on the abandoned Muslim camp and plundered everything there. Rānā Khan and the Jats chased the fugitives up to Fathpur Sikri, effectively cutting off their provision supply, so that grain sold in the Muslim camp at five seers to the Rupee. After refreshing his troops as best he could for a week at Fathpur, Ismail Beg left the place with his ally on 25th May and encamped in the Bāgh Dehra garden outside Agra.

As soon as the two Khans retreated from the disastrous attack on Dig, Mahadji Sindhia sent a strong detachment of his best cavalry (stiffened with more new arrivals from the Deccan) to cross into the Doāb and plunder Ghulām Qādir's newly acquired territories there.* Knowing full well his own inferiority in numbers and artillery and the demoralisation of his troops, Sindhia formed a very judicious plan of campaign which quickly succeeded. He kept the enemy enveloped by roving Deccan horse from a safe distance and greatly distressed them for provisions, while his newly arrived fresh troops from Maharashtra were sent to raid the Doāb and thus compel Ghulām Qādir to hasten to the defence of his

* *Dy.* i. 278, 295, 285, 300. *HP.* 518, 520-522. *PRC.* i. 220, 222. *Ibr.* iii. 114-117 (unsupported.)

own possessions there. This would leave Ismail Beg alone, and then it would not be difficult for the Marathas to crush him in his isolation. As a Maratha envoy wrote, "The troops of the Jat Rajah and Sindhia hover at a distance of 8 to 10 *kos* around the army of Ghulām Qādir and Ismail. In whichever direction these two Khans turn their faces, our men do not stay but flee away, being too afraid to stand a fight."

The Jāmbgāon contingent, 5,000 horse led by Devji Gavlé, was now advanced from its post near Mania (nine miles north of Dholpur) northwards across the Utangan to join Rānā Khan's division. Avoiding the still beleaguered fort of Agra, these troops first entered the Mathura district and expelled Ismail Beg's posts there and occupied Vrindāvan. One of the enemy battalions 700 strong with two guns posted here, in trying to escape into the Doāb, was overtaken on the bank of the Jamuna, four hundred of the men were killed, some others perished in trying to ford the Jamuna and also in the sinking of two ferry boats, and all their fire-arms (700 muskets and the two guns) as well as 25 horses were taken.

Then the victorious Devji hastened 16 miles northwards to Chirghāt and thence crossed into the Doāb, in order to convulse that country and cut off the grain convoys coming from that tract to the two Khans' camps before Agra. The Ruhela thanahs at Mot and Mahāvan were driven

out with slaughter and seven guns were captured here (4-10 June.) Koil city was sacked for six hours. The new strategy bore the expected fruit at once. Ghulām Qādir would listen to no appeal of Ismail Beg, but immediately sent away the bulk of his army from Agra to the defence of his own Doāb possessions. The rising flood of the Jamuna threatened his communication across it, and in alarm he himself crossed over with the rest of his army (15 June.)

For some weeks past the Marathas had been also making predatory night incursions on Ismail Beg's baggage camp with success, always taking care to run away with their spoils before they could be brought to an action. Ismail Beg, deserted by his ally, now found life unbearable: his provision supply was totally stopped, his starving ragged soldiers with their captains were daily deserting him for the Jat camp. Lesteneau and many Mughalias and Telingas had gone over to the enemy many weeks ago. And then, within two days of Ghulām Qādir's departure the crushing blow descended on the Hamadāni (17th June.)

§ 6. *Fourth stage of the contest: Ismail Beg finally crushed at Agra, 17th June 1788.*

In this decisive battle* of the entire campaign, Sindhia's planning showed consummate

* *DY.* i. 300, 303. *HP.* 524-527. Sat. i. 137. *Ibr.* iii. 116-119. *PRC.* i. 223. G. Ali iii. 264-267. ML. 331.

generalship and promptness of movement, joined to unfailing combination. The Jat-Maratha alliance had by this time been perfected; the courage and endurance of the Jat peasantry had been hitherto unavailing for the lack of capable leaders; but now the Marathas supplied this brain power, while the French-led musketeers added the necessary steadying element to the mobility of the Deccan light horse. These facts explain the completeness of the victory.

As soon as Ghulām Qādir began to transport his troops from Agra back into the Doāb, Rānā Khan sent fast couriers to recall Devji Gavlé from the Doāb to his own side. The junction was promptly effected and then the general set out in full strength to attack Ismail Beg. Meantime, Sindhia had heartened his troops for the critical contest by sending Rs. 113,000 and a hundred horses for distribution among them and attached ten pieces of artillery to the battalions of Lesteneau and De Boigne. The Telinga commandant Rāmru with four battalions and sixteen guns under him, was worn out by his privations in Ismail Beg's thankless service, and offered to desert to Rānā Khan. The pact was confirmed by a promise of Rs. 60,000 to him in bankers' bills, besides a jagir, on the eve of the battle.

In the fateful morning of the 17th of June, Rānā Khan massed his French-led infantry in the centre with the artillery in front. His two wings were formed by two powerful bodies of horse,

while a third cavalry division was posted behind the infantry with orders to wheel round at the right moment and fall upon the enemy's rear.

As the Maratha-Jat army came in sight of Ismail Beg's camp in Bāgh Dehra, a suburb of Agra, his captains took it for the usual daily demonstration of their timid enemy and did not care to arm for battle. But the steady advance of Rānā Khan and the fire of his artillery soon precipitated an action. Ismail Beg's guns in position replied with a lively cannonade which caused much greater loss to the Marathas, whose artillery was smaller and moving. Then Ismail Beg, with an impetuosity and courage worthy of Muhammad Beg Hamadāni's heir, charged the Maratha horse in person without waiting to form his battle order. The Deccan cavalry met the attack with equal bravery and crowded upon him from the two wings, "so as to strike his force in the waist." Gunfire ceased on both sides, and a severe fight at close quarters raged for an hour. But the disciplined sepoys of De Boigne and Lesteneau crushed all opposition before them by their cool and successive volleys, while Ramru with his four battalions withdrew from Ismail Beg's side without firing a shot. By the end of this time the Maratha reserve cavalry had made a detour and fallen upon Hamadāni's rear camp and set fire to the tents. Thus enveloped, first the servants and then the soldiers of the Muslim army took to flight and plunged into the Jamuna for

the Doāb. Ismail Beg, engrossed in the fight, cast his eyes on his right and left and found none but a few friends present. In despair, he sought to court a soldier's death by galloping into the thick of the enemy. But he had already received three wounds and Najaf Ali Khan (the son of Muhammad Beg) seizing his bridle turned him back from the lost field. The fallen general entered Agra city with only fifteen troopers, took his favourite mistress on his own steed, and going to the Jamuna bank drove his horse into the river and crossed into the Doāb. His wife, however, was drowned in trying to cross the river on an elephant.

Ismail Beg's defeat was complete and irretrievable. His army ceased to exist as an instrument of war. Excluding the four battalions of Rāmru which went over to the Marathas during the battle, Ismail Beg had about sixteen battalions of sepoys (including many who had deserted Mahadji at Lālsot) and five thousand Mughalia horse under him ; and these were soundly beaten. The slaughter that ensued among his broken troops was terrible, while many who escaped the sword were drowned in fording the swollen Jamunā. "For one *kos* from the field to the river bank, the ground was strewn with the corpses of men and horses." A Maratha despatch inflates his losses to 8,000 battalion sepoys slain and 2,000 Mughalia cavalry and foot musketeers drowned in the river [*HP*. 525.] On

the Maratha side about 250 men were reported as slain and six hundred as wounded besides 2,000 horses killed. But among their officers the casualty was heavy, five being slain.

But it was a cheap price for such a decisive victory. The spoils of the victors consisted of a hundred pieces of artillery (including those abandoned in the trenches before Agra fort), 5,000 camels, 2,000 horses, twelve elephants, all the standards, band, muskets, tents and other property of Hamadāni's army.

§ 7. *Emperor's campaign against Najaf Quli Khan, Feb.-March, 1788.*

We now turn to another event, which like the episode of Prince Jawan Bakht's adventure did not influence the main contest in any way. While Ghulām Qādir and Ismail Beg were waxing in power and the Maratha star in North India was rapidly setting, the Rajah of Jaipur was induced by his ministers to invite the Emperor to issue from Delhi and join his faithful Rajput vassals in an attempt to reconquer the lost possessions of the Crown from the local usurpers. Pratap Singh's ministers hoped that if their plan succeeded the grateful Emperor would be thenceforth planted as a lawful barrier against any future Maratha attempt to dominate the Delhi Government or encroach on Rajputana.

From the Jaipur point of view the nearest and most harmful of these usurpers was Najaf

Quli Khan,* who was carving out a principality for himself in Mewat and the Narnol region at the expense of the Shekhawati districts of the Kachhwa kingdom. He was equally hateful to the Emperor for his insolent contumacy to his Sovereign and seizure of Crownlands.

Sawai Pratap Singh's agent in these negotiations was the Gosain Himmat Bahadur who had been his mediator at Court in Mirza Najaf's time and after. The Emperor was tempted with the hope of gaining large sums as tribute from the Rajput princes if only he appeared among them in person. So, leaving Delhi on 4th January 1788, Shah Alam reached Bharawas, six miles south of Rewari, and here the Jaipur envoys Himmat Bahadur and Daulat Ram Haldia, as well as Bhim Singh the Marwar Bakhshi, waited on him on the 28th of the month. The Jaipur Rajah had his first audience on 3rd February. The two Courts remained encamped here for a month which was spent by the Emperor in dunning the Rajah for the promised tribute and the Rajah in replying that his realm had been devastated by Mahadji Sindhia and he had no money to give. After these vain parleys, Pratap Singh was glad to take his Sovereign's leave by giving bankers' bills for Rs. 25,000. [*DY*. i. 262, 279, 274.]

* Shah Alam's expedition against Najaf Quli.—*DC*. *DY*. i. 281, 272, 274. *HP*. 518. *Ibr*. iii. 122-127. *ML*. 318-325. G. Ali. iii. 252-256.

Shah Alam now tried to settle accounts with Najaf Quli Khan. His own position was precarious. As the Maratha envoy writes, "Money is nowhere to be seen. The Emperor is accompanied by five to seven thousand troops, but owing to fasting, fifty to a hundred men out of them are daily leaving him." In fact, Begam Samru's private army was the Sovereign's only defence. Najaf Quli lay encamped under the walls of Gokulgarh (two miles north of Rewari) with a force equal to his master's, but obstinately refused to restore that district and its forts or even to wait upon the royal visitor. On the contrary he laid claim to the post of Regent, as the only surviving "adopted son" of Mirza Najaf Khan, and to jagirs worth seven lakhs a year which appertained to that high office.*

Shah Alam had to do something before his army should totally dissolve through lack of pay. A week after the Jaipur party's departure, he ordered an attack on the rebel. Entrenching his camp, and placing Samru's force on his right and his Hindustani generals on the left, he sent one division under Badal Beg Khan and other Mughalia sardars ahead towards the rebel position. These Mughalia troops used to pass all

* "Najaf Quli is staying four *kos* from the imperial camp, with 1,000 horse, five battalions, and 35 guns, and declines to come to the Emperor's audience. The Emperor commands 2,000 horse, three battalions and 30 to 35 guns, but has nothing to eat. [*DY.* i. 281.]

the night in licentious revelry and drinking and fall asleep before daybreak. Najaf Quli learnt of it, and though himself a gay toper, he delivered a night attack on the slack and sleepy Mughalias (12th March), doing great havoc. Shah Mir Khan, Itiqad-ud-daulah and some smaller officers were slain ; the rebel's Sikh allies charged up to the Emperor's residential tents. But Himmat Bahadur drove the raiders out of the trenches. Shah Alam rode off and took shelter within the square of Begam Samru's European-led infantry, who by their rapid and accurate artillery and small arm fire put Najaf Quli to flight at last.

But the Emperor had not the strength to crush the rebel, nor any money for supporting his inflated army. Summer was fast approaching. So, at Begam Samru's welcome mediation, he agreed to patch up a peace. On 19th March Najaf Quli was presented to him, by the same lady, with his wrists tied together with a handkerchief, like a penitent captive rebel, in order to soothe imperial dignity. "His offences were forgiven and he was given a *khilat*, . . . restored to his offices and left in charge of his districts as before"!

After this conclusion, as lame and ludicrous as Muhammad Shah's Bangarh expedition, Shah Alam at once returned to Delhi (23rd March.) "This failure has made his prestige light." [*DY*. i. 274.]

CHAPTER XXXVII.

GHULAM QADIR'S TRIUMPH AND FALL.

§ 1. *Ghulām Qādir is admitted to Delhi by nāzir Manzur Ali and appointed Mir Bakhshi and Regent, Sept. 1787.*

The story of Mahadji Sindhia's contest with Ismail Beg Hamadāni has taken us to the middle of 1788. It is now necessary to go one year backwards in order to study the acts of a less efficient but more harmful enemy at the royal Court. This was Ghulām Qādir Khan, the son and successor of Zābita Khan Ruhela. He had entered into his dead father's heritage (21 Jan. 1785) without paying the customary succession fee to the Emperor or his Regent. His house, like that of all Afghans, was torn by internal dissensions. Ghulām Qādir had once run away from his father to Sindhia's camp for refuge. He now imprisoned his paternal uncles and mother and attached their property. Sindhia courted his help against the Sikh raiders of the Cis-Satlaj and upper Doāb tracts, in oblivion of the fact that these men had been made by Zābita Khan the prop of his house.* In February 1787, Sindhia

*In 1777 Zābita publicly professed the Sikh faith and took the name of Dharam Singh. Hence the saying: *ék Guru-kā do chele, ādhā Sikh ādhā Ruhélé.* [Ch. 29 § 12.]

detached Ambāji Inglé to Karnal for controlling the Sikhs in that region by making a pact with Ghulām Qādir. But the young Ruhela Chief showed no eagerness to accept the invitation, and when at last he did come to see Ambāji (mid April) he left him abruptly.

The defection of Muhammad Beg Hamadāni from Sindhia's side (25 May) was Ghulām Qādir's opportunity. Ambāji was recalled with his troops to Rajputana and the Ruhela began to drive out the Maratha collectors from the upper Doab and seize the imperial territory there. The Maratha retreat from Lālsot fanned his ambition to the fullest blaze ; Ghulām Qādir would become Mir Bakhshi like his father and grandfather and conduct the government of the Empire. So, he marched his army to Bāghpat (21st August) and sent to ask for an interview with the Emperor. There was a conflict of policy in the royal council. Sindhia's representatives at Court were Shah Nizāmuddin (a former religious mendicant of saintly pedigree) and Lādoji Shitolé Desmukh (Mahadji's son-in-law), and these two tried to uphold his cause though unable to back it with adequate strength of arms. Against them were ranged Manzur Ali Khan the all-powerful superintendent of the harem (*nāzir*) and the old ministerial clique of Mirzā Najaf's time. The *nāzir* bore implacable hostility to Sindhia and wanted to use Ghulām Qādir as his tool for overthrowing the hated Hindu control over the

Government. Indeed, he had saved the child Ghulām Qādir's life by throwing his mantle over him at the imperial sack of Ghausgarh and now spoke of him as his nurseling. [*DY*. i. 232.]

Delhi fort could have easily held out for months, if only there had been a man to lead its defence, for the river was now in high flood and the invading Ruhela army on the east bank was starving and daily dispersing. But Sindhia's cause at Court was ruined by the incapacity and cowardice of his two agents there and his own bankruptcy which made the unpaid garrison of Delhi rise frequently in mutiny and mob these ministers throughout the Lālsot crisis. And now when Ghulām Qādir appeared at Shahdara, opposite the capital, Shāh Nizāmuddin rashly decided to play the soldier. Instead of defending Delhi by holding the line of the river as military experts advised him to do, he sent a force across the raging Jamuna to attack. The detachment was too small and "his raw levies had not yet learnt how to hold their muskets." Immediately on landing on the east bank, they were attacked by the Ruhelas, led by a Frenchman named Baise (?), defeated in a twinkle and driven back into the river, where a few of them were drowned and the rest escaped, after abandoning all their muskets and one piece of artillery. Mādho Rao Phālké who had been sent to the eastern bank three days earlier with a small troop of Maratha horse, had no time to save this detachment and

promptly admitted defeat by shutting himself up in Shahdara and finally surrendering to Ghulām Qādir. [*DC. PRC.* i. 164. *Ibr.* iii. 24-25 (full.) *DY.* i. 229.]

This encounter happened in the morning of the 23rd of August, within sight of all the people of Delhi. The Emperor was now induced to open friendly parleys with Ghulām Qādir by sending his slave Tamkin to him. On hearing of it, Sindhia's two agents fled away from Delhi that night. The city mob rose against them, and 20 camels laden with Deshmukh's property and some carts conveying Nizām-ud-din's treasure and belongings were plundered by the soldiery. Next day the Emperor placed Shah Nizām-ud-din's house under attachment and threw his brother into prison. [*DC. DY.* i. 227.]

Into the capital, now swept clear of every enemy, the Ruhela chief came on the 26th and was presented to the Emperor by the nāzir. Then he crossed over to the Delhi side with his troops and occupied Shah Nizāmuddin's garden-house in the southern suburb between the Delhi Gate and the Turkman Gate of the city. He laid claim to the post of Mir Bakhshi and the control of the imperial administration as in the days of his grandfather and offered to march out with his army for the reconquest of the Jat country and Agra district, which legally appertained to the Mir Bakhshi's office, as soon as the necessary *jāgirs* were assigned to him for the support of his

contingent. The nāzir was his intermediary and patron. On 5th September Ghulām Qādir entered Delhi at the head of 2,000 Ruhelas and established his rule over the royal city. The Emperor had no help but to confer on him the post of Bakhshi-ul-mamālik with the titles of Amir-ul-umara Raushan-ud-daulah Bahadur and the customary robes of honour and presents. From hard drinking his eyes were inflamed and he was in an uncontrollable mood. The trembling Emperor invested him with the robes of the Regent and ordered rescripts to be issued for granting him *jāgirs* corresponding to his rank and office, and also for placing the control of the Crownlands in his hands. When the royal servants whispered, "He is unworthy of this post," Shah Alam silenced them by saying, "I must turn this calamity out of Delhi somehow or other ; if not, should the Ruhelas lay hands on the city nobody can save it. It is expedient to humour him."*

§ 2. *Ghulām Qādir turns against the Emperor, Oct. 1787. His conquests in the Doab. Prince Jawān Bakht's futile adventure.*

But the drunken Afghan youth could not yet have all things in his own way at Delhi. The

* *DY.* i. 228. "When Ghulām Qādir went up to the Emperor to present a *nazar* of thanks offering for his sword of office, not a single gold coin for the purpose could be found anywhere. Such is the condition of the Mir Bakhshi." (Maratha envoy at Delhi.)

widow of Walter Reinhard, popularly called Begam Sarmu, was present at the capital with her compact French-led army of four battalions of disciplined sepoys and 85 guns, to guard the throne. She refused to take her orders from the new Regent, and then there was a rupture between the two. The lord of Ghausgarh could expand his possessions towards Delhi only at the expense of the principality of Sardhāna in the same region which Begam Samru was building up. The remainder of September passed in their wrangles and parleys. The Emperor's policy was to use the Begam as a shield against the Ruhela dictator; he honoured her and her stepson Zafar-yāb Khan, and with her help and that of the Sikh sardar Bhangā Singh, manned the walls and trenches of Delhi to resist Ghulām Qādir, who crossed back into the Doab (12th September) in order to avoid a clash with Begum Samru, on the west bank.

The nāzir's political sagacity was shown by the fact that within a month his *protege* the new Regent was bombarding his master's palace. On 7th October, Ghulām Qādir from the east bank opened fire on Delhi fort. At first Salimgarh suffered from the cannonade, and finally on 30th October twelve large balls fell inside the palace, killing a child in the courtyard of the Diwān-i-ām. [*DC.*] The Emperor wrote frantic appeals for help to every side, but the nāzir frightened him into countermanding his order to Mahadji Sindhia

to come to Delhi. Hence, Sindhia's envoy Ambāji Inglé had to return baffled from his audience (14th Nov.) The *nāzir* at the same time conveyed to Ghulām Qādir his sovereign's pardon for the outrage on the palace. A month after this rebuff to Sindhia, his power in the north suffered an utter collapse when Ismail Beg drove him beyond the Chambal (20 Dec.) and the jungle of the Delhi monarchy was left masterless for the unfettered play of the rival ambitions of the local Muslim nobles.

Prince Jawān Bakht (Jahāndār Shāh)* arrived at Delhi at his father's call on 8th December, 1787. But the worthy heir plotted to seize the palace by surprise, confine his father and make himself *de facto* sovereign. His own want of character and capacity and utter lack of material resources destroyed all hope of his ever being able to play the role of the saviour of the Delhi monarchy. At last Shah Alam was glad to get rid of him after thirteen days, by sending him with the rank of governor (*subahdār*) to Agra,—a province which had yet to be conquered. The prince reached Agra on 24th December, but finding Ismail Beg unwilling to serve him and having no independent force of his own, wisely rejected the pious *faqir* Khair-ud-din's counsel to assassinate Ismail Beg

* The Prince's movements and policy are described in the fullest detail by Khair-ud-din (his unheeded Mentor) in *Ibr.* iii. 41-101. Dates in *DC.* G. Ali, iii. 238-247, 250. *HP.* 183. *DY.* i. 253, 232.

and left the place soon afterwards to see if he could have better luck with Ghulām Qādir in the Doab. This hoped for Afghan patron attempted to kidnap his master's son but the plan was foiled by the prince's firmness. At last in utter disappointment, Jawān Bakht sneaked back to his refuge in British territory (end of February 1788.) His only gain from this adventure was to take back with him his wife and children whom he had left behind in Delhi when escaping from that fort in April 1784.

From the barren interlude of the prince's adventure ,we now turn to the history of Ghulām Qādir. Immediately after being created Mir Bakshshi, the Ruhela chieftain renewed his career of usurping the Crownlands in the Doab,—both the Emperor's privy purse estates (*sarf-i-khās* mahals) and the jāgirs of the Marathas, as the only means of finding subsistence for his growing army. He had already seized Jhinjhāna, Barnāwa, Baraut, Budhāna and other districts up to Mirat city. The Maratha outpost at Mirat held out for some time, but the defence broke down when Mahadji retired from before Agra at the end of the year. Ghulām Qādir pushed on southwards through the Doāb, occupying the country and driving out the agents of the lawful jāgirdārs. [*DY*. i. 226, 230.] Further south, Himmat Bahadur had laid siege to the Maratha fort of Firuzabad, Phup Singh Jat and Yaqub Khan Pathan had recovered their respective seats of

Mursan and Khurja, and Malik Md. Khan and Himmat Bahadur established their own rule over the entire tract from Sikandrabad to Firuzabad and Aligarh. [*Ibid.* 246, 248] The conflicting ambitions and plotting for treachery among these nobles prevented any concerted action by them against Mahadji. In the earlier months of 1788, while Malik Muhammad was seizing lands round his jagir of Koil-Jalesar, Ghulām Qādir remained involved in the siege of Aligarh (which fell to him on 17th February) and Ismail Beg in that of Agra fort. But when at the end of March Sindhia renewed his offensive north of the Chambal, Ismail Beg made a pact with Ghulām Qādir, brought him over to Agra (9 April) and joined forces with him. How the campaigns of these two allies failed in the end and left the Jats and Marathas undisputed masters of that field, has been already narrated in the last chapter.

§ 3. *Ghulām Qādir with Ismail Beg reappears and takes possession of Delhi city. The nazir's treason. July 1788.*

We now turn to the history of these two allies after their crushing defeat on 17th June in the outskirts of Agra. From that fatal encounter Ismail Beg Hamadāni arrived in Ghulām Qādir's camp on the opposite bank with only the clothes he stood in. Nor could he find any relief here. The Ruhela's own position was unsafe, because next morning the cannon-balls of Sindhia's army

began to fall into Ghulām Qādir's camp from across the river, and the news came that the victors were attempting to cross the Jamuna higher up at Mathura and cut him off from his base in the upper Doāb. So, the two allies parted company: Ismail Beg first went towards Firuzabad, but on being sternly refused admission into Oudh territory he fled to Patparganj opposite Delhi and sent to beg an audience of the Emperor, which was at once declined and the city gates were shut against him as a precaution. So, he had to return to Ghulām Qādir.

That Ruhela chief, after breaking camp at the Nur-āfshān park opposite Agra, went to Aligarh, replenished his military strength by taking guns and munition out of its vast magazine, and marched to Shahdara (1st July 1788.) He mercilessly robbed the populous cities of Shahdara, Patparganj and Ghāziabād, which were rich emporia of the trade of the Doab coming to feed the capital. Ismail Beg here joined him and formed a new pact for the division of the lands and spoils seized in the proportion of two to one between them.

The Emperor and the capital again trembled. A feeble attempt at defence was made through Himmat Bahadur, the only faithful general left to him, but the attempt failed through the Sovereign's lack of personal courage and will force, the disloyalty of his nāzir and the treachery of his Mughalia troops, who were now the only garrison

of Delhi. A troop of Maratha horse, only 2000 strong, had been sent up by Mahadji from Mathura ((8th July), under Rāvloji and Bhagirath Rao (his clansmen), and these reached Bārāpulā, 10 miles south of Delhi three days later, and interviewed the Emperor. But events now moved too fast, and the Ruhela, working in secret concert with the eunuch nāzir Manzur Ali and the grocer Rām Ratan Modi who dominated the Emperor's mind, anticipated the Marathas in the possession of the capital. These two traitors sent 200 ox-loads of powder and shot from the fort-stores to Ghulām Qādir, and intrigued for his success.

Immediately after hearing of the Maratha victory over Ismail Beg at Agra, the Emperor had sent two courtiers with the highest robes of honour and presents to Mahadji (24th June), inviting him to Delhi. But the nāzir and other courtiers of the old gang were mortally afraid lest Sindhia should now punish them for their late treachery and hostility. They clung to the hope of saving themselves by placing Ghulām Qādir Khan in charge of the capital. At first Shah Alam took up a strong attitude of opposition to the Ruhela and ordered the city to be held against him. But he had no longer the efficient corps of Begam Samru at his back. His only generals were Himmat Bahadur Gosāin and Badal Beg the Mughalia leader. The exactions of the Gosain had roused the entire Delhi population against him, and his troops also were weakened by starvation. Badal

Beg and the entire Muslim force at Delhi were corrupted by Ghulām Qādir through his friends at Court.

On 14th July the Ruhelas crossed the river at Barāri Ghāt, in the north of Delhi fort, at three quarters of the day. The imperial army was sent forth to oppose them. But treason had done its work ; Badal Beg and his Mughalias went over to the enemy ; and then the loyal Hindu generals, Himmat Bahadur and Ravloji Sindhia, also withdrew from their positions to avoid being caught in a trap. That very night these two retreated to Faridabad, 17 miles south of Delhi, and the capital lay defenceless. On the 18th the Afghan-Hamadāni army took full possession of the *city*. But the *palace-fort* could still have held out, as it was garrisoned by the loyal Red Battalion (*Lāl Paltan*.) Resistance within its impregnable walls could have allowed time for an adequately strong army to come up from Mahadji's camp to its relief. But the imperial cause was ruined by the treachery of the nāzir.*

On the 15th the weak Emperor was tricked by his nāzir into granting an audience to Ghulām Qādir. Thus began the last Afghan occupation of Delhi which lasted for two and a half months, from 18th July to 2nd October, 1788. It inflicted unspeakable suffering and dishonour on the royal

* *Ibr.* iii. 128-134. *DC.* ML. 334. G. Ali. iii. 267. *DY.* i. 301, 304, 308, 309. *HP.* 528. *PRC.* i. 225.

family and ruined the prestige of the empire beyond recovery. Shah Alam was deposed (30 July) and blinded (10 Aug.), tender children and helpless women were done to death by denying them food or drink for days together, princes were flogged, princesses were dishonoured, servants were beaten till they died, the entire palace area, as well as the mansions of the rich outside the fort, were turned upside down by digging for concealed treasure, the palace was denuded of its property and the royal family of its youthful beauties to gratify the Ruhela's passions. It was a dance of demons for nine weeks.

§ 4. *Mahadji Sindhia's policy and action during Ghulam Qadir's usurpation vindicated.*

What was Mahadji doing during these days of agony? Can he be blamed for having been too slow in going to the rescue of a master who had publicly cashiered him? A study of his movements and position at the time will furnish the answer to this question.

After the great victory at Agra on 17th June, Rānā Khan could not promptly follow up his success and make an end of his enemies by a relentless pursuit, because when Ghulām Qādir broke up camp next day, he sank all the boats of that ferry and dragged away their crew with himself. Rānā Khan, therefore, had to move up to Mathura and there collect fresh boats and boatmen to ferry his army over into the Doab.

In the meantime the river level was daily rising. Thus a fortnight was lost, during which the two defeated Khans reached Delhi. On 4th July, Mahadji Sindhia himself arrived at Mathura, and here Ranjit Singh Jat joined him four days later. From this place a small force was detached to Delhi on the 8th, but neither Mahadji nor his main army under Rānā Khan moved to the capital.

It should not be forgotten that Sindhia's position even now was far from secure. His recent victory had been almost accidental and reflected the errors and misfortunes of his enemies rather than the undisputed superiority of his own arms. The sepoy battalions and Mughalia horse that had deserted him before and had come over to his side during that battle, might turn traitors a third time. The Emperor himself had warned Sindhia about the character of these faithless mercenaries. [*DY.* i. 229.] Sindhia knew that he had not a single real friend north of the Chambal except the Jat Rajah, and he was not going to repeat Sadāshiv Bhāu's mistake by leaving his secure base in Jat-land, advancing a hundred miles northwards among a hostile population and there living "in the air" with a long and precarious line of supply and communication. With an inveterate enemy like nāzir Manzur Ali constantly at the Emperor's ears and that Emperor a wax doll in the hands of any strong-willed courtier by his side, it was unsafe for Mahadji

to go to Delhi, except in overwhelming force [HP. 530.]

But his Deccani troops refused to march to Delhi unless they were paid their dues, and their arrears ran back for nine years to the time when he had led them into Gujarat for fighting General Goddard. It took long to "persuade" them through Jivā Dādā Bakhshi to be satisfied for the time being with fractional payments and more liberal promises. [HP. 537.]*

In addition to this, he had at last been disillusioned about the value of the reinforcements promised to him by his master at Puna, or rather that master's master, Nānā Fadnis. During the long months of agony and suspense, when his future hung in the balance, persistent reports came from the Deccan that the Peshwa's Government had decided to break their unsuccessful general in the north and supersede Sindhia by Ali Bahadur or Tukoji Holkar in conducting the Maratha interests at the Delhi Court and collecting the tributes of Rajputana. The British Resident reports such a plan again and again in his despatches to the Governor-General. This was the unkindest cut of all from the Chitpavan Machiavel whom Mahadji fondly called his brother. [PRC. i. 226.]

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* Why Sindhia delayed.—*PRC.* i. 225-227. *HP.* 537. His new policy of conciliation.—*PRC.* i. 224. Sat. i. 165. *DY.* i. 330 (Raghogarh.)

Therefore, Sindhia must first know clearly where he stood, and he must build up a reliable foundation of alliances. For this he reversed his former policy as Regent; he would no longer assert the full rights of the Crown against powerful military chiefs by resuming their usurped imperial territory or calling them to a strict muster of the contingents that they were paid to keep. No, he would now revert to the facile and mischievous policy of Mirzā Najaf Khan by parcelling out the Empire as fiefs to the military leaders and thus entrench himself amidst a coalition of selfish interest. For this he had abased himself before an inveterate enemy like Umrāo-gir Gosain when brought a prisoner in arms against him (7th April) Sindhia gave him every honour and comfort and facility for escape (on 18th May.) He conciliated the Rāghogarh Rānā by restoring him to liberty and his estate. And he now offered to every Muslim captain and professional commandant of mercenary battalions, —even to Ghulām Qādir and Ismail Beg—an agreement to confirm them in their landed possessions, if only they would be friends with him. These negotiations, conducted by the sly old fox Shāh Nizām-ud-din,—took time to mature, and during the necessary interval before Mahadji felt himself strong enough to march to Delhi, Ghulām Qādir struck at the Emperor. Shah Alam's cowardice and his imbecile dependence upon the faithless nāzir robbed him of the least chance of

defence, or of holding out for a month or two only, during which the starving Ruhela hordes would have dispersed of themselves and Sindhia's relief army could have reached the walls of the beleaguered capital.

§ 5. *Causes of Shah Alam's downfall analysed: his character, his domestic enemies and faithless advisers.*

But it was not to be. No man can rise above destiny, as the wise of ancient days have truly said. Destiny is only another name for character, and Shah Alam's character alone was responsible for the fate that now overwhelmed him and his house.

The Pādishāh was extremely weak and inconstant, but not treacherous nor incapable of right thinking. He only lacked firmness of purpose and the capacity for action. The bleak penury of the first fifty years of his life and then the habitual use of opium (as an aphrodisiac sedative) had paralysed his will power, while leaving his intellect unclouded. Hence, with all his intelligence, his daily study of scripture and history, and his life of piety and abstinence (except in making additions to his harem), he only proved another example of how cowards die many times before their death.

His clear brain recognised that among all the competitors for power at Delhi, Mahadji Sindhia

was the only man capable of managing the Regency and enabling him to realise his heart's wish which was, in the homely phrase that he used to the Maratha envoy, "to eat his bread for a few days in peace." Every one, including the British Residents, perceived this preference of the Emperor. Shah Alam had cherished an unshaken faith in Mahadji's loyalty and capacity ever since the march from Allahabad in 1771, and he knew that the great Maratha's rivals for the Regency were fools or knaves. As for the English, though Shah Alam in days of extreme fear to his life or throne used to appeal to the Governor-General for armed aid or an asylum in British territory, it was his consistent resolve never to make himself a puppet in their hands as the Nawab of Oudh was. Nor did he wish to be daily insulted by an English keeper as he had been during his years of sojourn in Allahabad. But in spite of his spineless character, Shah Alam could have been saved if only he had a more honest servant than Manzur Ali the eunuch as his keeper and a worthier counsellor than Ram Ratan the grocer at his side during the eclipse of Mahadji's power at Delhi.

Over the fortunes of Delhi royalty at this time lay the blight of Shah Alam's character. To make things still worse, he had the bitterest enemies under his own roof. A dynastic feud helped to bring about his ruin, though that ruin ultimately overwhelmed the rivals of his blood

no less than his own sons and grandsons. The line of Alamgir II had gained the throne of Delhi by ousting the branch of Muhammad Shah reigning before, had blinded and killed the last legitimate sovereign of that branch and kept that hapless Emperor's descendants in grinding poverty within the cells of the royal prison in Delhi fort (called the *Salātin* quarters.) This had gone on for thirty-four years without any relief.*

Shah Alam's miserliness had grown with age and the increase of his treasure hoards. Though he had made large accumulations from the Bengal tribute after his treaty of 1765 with Lord Clive, and from the spoils of Pathargarh and Ghausgarh, he refused to give his captive kinsmen anything beyond the coarsest daily bread. Even that bread did not always reach them, and the famished grandsons and nephews of former Emperors used to make a deafening clamour which penetrated beyond their prison-walls to the ears of the foreign visitors to the royal audience, such as

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* *Ibr.* iii. 140. When prince Akbar appealed to his friend the newly crowned Bidār Bakht to relieve the sufferings of his hungry and thirsty children, Bidar replied, "The Empire of Hindustan belongs to my forefathers. During the thirty years that your father has been Emperor, what hardships and sorrows did we not endure? For thirty years we have borne it patiently. Now the turn of kingship has come to me."

Row by starving prisoner-princes: Modave's *Journal du Voyage* tr. by me in *Islamic Culture,* 1935. Pester, *War and Sport in India.*

Comte de Modave (in 1775) and Captain John Pester (in 1804), like the howls of ravenous beasts in a neglected zoo. These princelings were driven to desperation by their monotonous sufferings and the utter vacuity of their lives. They were ever ready to join any usurper of the Regency who would raise them to the throne and give them a few days' relish of the joys of kingship, even though they knew that deposition and murder would most probably close their brief reigns.

And the females of the species nursed even greater malignity. Mālika-i-Zamāni, the honoured chief widow of the Emperor Muhammad Shah, who lived in her own mansion outside the fort walls, had nursed her step-son Ahmad Shah, the Emperor, and could not forget that Shah Alam's father had seized the crown by robbing Ahmad Shah of his heritage and eyesight. So, she now offered Ghulām Qādir twelve lakhs of Rupees as the price of replacing Shah Alam by Bidar Bakht, the captive son of Ahmad Shah, and she was known to have amassed much wealth of her own. Sāhiba Mahal, another widow of Muhammad Shah and the mother of the great Durrāni conqueror's wife Hazrat Mahal, joined her in this project. [*DY*. i. 309. But *Ibr*. iii. 137 gives ten lakhs.]

§ 6. *Ghulam Qadir's vindictiveness towards Delhi royalty.*

A second vendetta mingled with that of the princes of Timurid blood, to make the ruin of

Shah Alam II complete and accentuate its agony and shame. Najib-ud-daula had been regent of the empire for ten years, but his son had roused Shah Alam's wrath and had been defeated and his two seats at Pathargarh and Ghausgarh had been sacked with every cruelty and their treasures plundered by the victors. Now was the turn of Zābita's son. Ghulām Qādir saw visions of his father and grandfather chiding him for not avenging the wrongs of their house on the effete Timurids of Delhi. He believed himself to be the divinely appointed instrument for purging the royal house of Hindustan ; with his manly Afghan clansmen at his back he claimed to be "the Scourge of God," (*Qahar-i-Khudā.*) He must abase into the dust the cowards and lechers who soiled the throne of the Empire of India. The Afghan spirit of revenge* would not be satisfied unless he recovered by force every article taken away from his father by the imperialists and exacted compound interest on it. This explains the brutality, the long drawn out torments and the dishonour of royal ladies which marked out his sack of Delhi from every other atrocity of the kind known in the blood-red annals of Islam.

The torture and dishonour inflicted by Ghulām Qādir Khan on the Delhi royal family, on its tender babes and aged women, on its servant-girls, eunuchs, petty store-keepers and

* Ghulām Qādir's revenge.—*Ibr.* iii. 154 (*Qahar-i-Khudā*), 141, 143 (guns of Najib-ud-daulah taken back.)

humble valets as well as the highest princes,—form a long chapter, which fills, in my manuscript of Khairuddin's Persian history, 33 foolscap folio pages, with 20 lines to the page and drags on from day to day for two months. But a modern historian cannot conduct his reader through all the agonised circles of this Inferno of the living; he must pass over the horrid details and give only a brief general sketch of the kinds of suffering borne by the Timurid royal house, not a hundredth part of which was endured by the house of Capet, whose misery too found a mercifully speedy end on the guillotine.

§ 7. *Ghulām Qādir deposes Shah Alam and crowns Bidār Bakht, 31 July 1788.*

After Ghulām Qādir and Ismail Beg had been admitted into the palace by the nāzir who forbade any resistance by the Red Battalion guarding the gates (15th July 1788), they occupied Delhi city (18th.) Then they began to press the Emperor for money to furnish forth their army for a holy war against the infidels from Maharashtra. Shah Alam had to yield to every demand they made, and sent his son Sulaiman Shukoh (24th) as a hostage for his good faith to their camp, to accompany them in the projected *jihad*. Meantime, the Dowager Empress Mālika-i-Zamāni had made a pact with Ghulām Qādir to give the throne to her grandson Bidār Bakht in return for twelve lakhs of Rupees; and this agreement was now to be implemented.

On 30th July the two Khans came to the fort and swore on the Qurān to be true to Shah Alam. The loyal commandant of the Red Battalion offered to resist their entry, but the trustful Emperor forbade any opposition. Thus, two thousand Afghans took over control of the palace and drove out the king's own guards, without a blow. Then Ghulām Qādir abused and threatened the Emperor and kept him and his sons confined in the chapel,* while he with Ismail occupied the Diwān-i-khās and the Haiyāt Bakhsh garden all night, amidst the loud weeping of the harem ladies.

Early next morning, the rebel chiefs enthroned Bidār Bakht,—the son of the ex-Emperor Ahmad Shah,—in the Diwān-i-khās, under the title of Nāsir-ud-din Muhammad Jahan Shah, and sent Shah Alam and his 19 sons into the prison-quarters called the *Salātin*. The plunder of the palace by the Ruhelas had begun the evening before and it continued till the last day of Ghulām Qādir's stay in Delhi.*

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* Deposition of Shah Alam II.—*DC. PRC.* i. 228. *Ibr.* iii. 137—139. (Alacuna in my ms. of ML. G. Ali gives only a few verses.) *DY.* i. 310, 311.

DC and a Persian news-letter to W. Palmer state that Ghulam Qadir deposed Shah Alam on discovering that Emperor's letter of appeal to Sindhia. But Khair-ud-din among his minute details mentions no such breach of faith on the old sovereign's part. Moreover, after 15th July, Shah Alam was a mere cypher and the *nāzir* all in all within the fort.

§ 8. *Shah Alam blinded. Imperial family and palace servants put to torture, Oct.-Nov. 1788.*

The deposed monarch was pressed to divulge his treasure hoards. When he replied that had nothing more beyond what had been already found in the treasury and stores, he was threatened and insulted. Ghulām Qādir sat down by his side, passed his arm familiarly round his neck and blew his tobacco smoke into his sovereign's face! Then the unhappy king was kept seated in the sun, without food or drink.

On being urged again and again to disclose the hiding place of his wealth, Shah Alam at last replied in bitterness, "What I possessed, you have already found in the store-rooms. Have I kept anything hidden in my belly?" The Ruhela's retort was, "May be your belly will have to be ripped open". On 10th October, in a frenzy of vindictiveness and avarice, Ghulām Qādir had needles driven through the eyes of Shah Alam. Next day, in unimaginable brutality, he called for the Court-painter and bade him draw a picture of himself as he knelt on his half-dead master's bosom and carved out one eye-ball with his dagger, while the other eye was extracted by Qandahāri Khan. The wounded old man was left for days together without a drop of water ; three valets were killed and two water-carriers were wounded by Ghulām Qādir with his sword, in

order to deter others from relieving the royal distress in secret.*

The maid-servants of the palace were subjected to inhuman and disgusting tortures, and the eunuchs were beaten to death to make them confess where the fort treasure lay buried. The screw was next put on the princes and princesses ; all members of the royal family were kept without food or drink for three or four days, till many of the children and old ladies sank into death and one wife of the new Emperor died from utter terror. Two ex-Empresses died of privation, and one of them was by the Ruhela's order left unburied for three days until the stench became unbearable. Maniyār Singh reported that in two days 21 princes and princesses had died and others were in a dying condition.

Revenge is sweet, but it may be bought at a price which turns it into gall and worm-wood, as Mālika-i-Zamāni now found to her cost. She had secured her grandson's accession by forming a league with the Ruhela and had used her brief days of power to plunder the houses of the wives of Shah Alam and send them away to Salimgarh

* G. Q. went up to Shah Alam, whose eyes were still running blood, and pulling him by the beard cried out, "Served you right. This is the return for your action at Ghausgarh." [*Ibr.* 147.] Afghan vengeance may sleep for decades, it never dies.

G. Qadir's atrocities.—*Ibr.* iii. 136-174 (fullest.) *DC. PRC.* i. 227—235. *DY.* i. 309—314, 344, 327. *HP.* 530, 537, 538. Sat. i 150.

prison without a change of clothing, and beat their servant-girls for their mistresses' wealth. But when she asked Ghulām Qādir to hand the palace over to her now that he had collected more than the promised twelve lakhs from it, he replied that the contents of the palace treasury were the former spoils of his father's capitals, and that her debt to him must be satisfied out of her private property. He began to beat the princes and even a sister of Shah Alam for extorting their wealth, and on 22nd August, had Mālika-i-Zamāni and Sāhiba Mahal brought away from their mansions in the city with only the clothes they were wearing and ordered them to be placed on the terrace of the Octagonal Tower, exposed to the gaze of the public on the river bank, and subjected to unslaked thirst for hours together. Their mansions were dug up and swept clear of everything found there above or below the ground by the Ruhela's agents.

One almost feels a grim satisfaction that divine justice did not sleep over the prime cause of these princely sufferings, the arch-traitor nāzir Manzur Ali. His turn came next. When he could produce no more money from the palace, his Afghan foster-child turned sharply on him and asked, "Even maid-servants have been revealing the hiding places of gems and gold. How is it that you, who have long been superintendent of the Emperor's household, do not know them?" A fine of seven lakhs was laid on him and he him-

self was beaten, dragged into a latrine and threatened with having his mouth stuffed with excrement unless he paid it. His house was sacked and yielded Rs. 40,000, besides 5000 gold coins, gold and silver ware, jewellery and costly clothing (23rd Sept.).

§ 9. *Ghulām Qādir's brutality of speech,—dishonours queens and princesses.*

The young Ruhelā Chief's avarice and vengefulness were accompanied by a brutality of speech and manners which is surprising, because in a habitual drunkard like him one often finds a certain bonhomie and intervals of frankness and liberality. But Ghulām Qadir was without pity, as he was without shame or truthfulness. When his Court-patron Manzur Ali appealed to him to spare him torture by recounting how he had saved the child Ghulām Qādir's life at Ghausgarh, the Ruhela's reply was, "Do you not know the old proverb, 'To kill a serpent and spare its young, is not wise'?" He forced Prince Akbar Shah, the heir to Shah Alam's throne, to get drunk and dance, though dancing by a male is considered a most despicable act in Indian opinion. At the sight of the poor terrified youth's tottering steps, the Ruhela laughed and cynically remarked, "If you and your family had not been singers and dancers, I should not have come to this position." One day he cried out, "I shall order my Ruhelas to drag away the Mughal princesses to their

houses without wedlock, so that from their seed a manlier race may spring." Many more examples of such taunting are given by Khair-ud-din.

Murder for the throne and torturing for treasure are familiar things in palace revolutions in the East and were not unknown in mediæval Europe. But the worst offence of Ghulām Qādir in the eyes of Indian society was his dishonouring of the women of the imperial family. Some of them were beaten, many starved to death, and the two most honoured widows of Emperor Muhammad Shah and the queens of Shah Alam were exposed to public view without any screen around the place or over-all (*burqa*) on their persons. He went even further. Hearing of the beauty of the youthful daughters of two Shāhzādas, he called them up before him at night in the Moti Mahal, stripped them of their veil and wimple, showed them to his boon companions, asked indelicate questions about them and hugged their persons.*

The unhappy princesses were at last rescued and restored to their families by Maniyār Singh commandant. So greatly was the Delhi royal house still honoured by all clauses, amidst its decline poverty and defeat, that even the rudest rustics and most ferocious brigands would refuse to insult a Mughal princess by look or act. Only

*This is my mild translation of *Az har eke insāf-i-bemāli-e-ānhā mikhwāst; wa tā bahar eke ikhtilat-i-nashaista dar miān dāsht.* [*Ibr.* 153.]

six years after this, a very clever English civil servant named Thomas Twining made a private journey to Delhi. On his way back, near Bulandshahar, his slender escort of 20 sepoys was threatened by a band of 150 to 200 strongly armed Gujars, the most fierce and dreaded class of habitual robbers. He quickly had his own *palki* screened round and bade his guards cry out *Padishahka haremki Bibi Sahib* ("A lady of the imperial seraglio"), and at once this large robber horde withdrew after making him a cold salam! (*Travels in India*, 269.) Even savage Gujars and hardened robbers shrank from a deed which the son of one imperial Regent, the grandson of another and himself a Regent by office did not blush to commit.*

The merit of efficacy cannot be denied to the Ruhela's methods of torture. However inhuman their character, they bore speedy fruit. Maid-servants through fear of torture or greed of reward or spite, divulged the secret chambers where coins, gems, gold and silver plate and costly clothing were kept concealed. Some of these, from having been buried underground or kept in cellars (*sard-āba*) for generations, had become utterly discoloured. Some of the cloth of gold

* From *HP*. 530 we learn that a selection of choice beauties from the imperial harem was taken away to his palace at Ghausgarh. *Ibr*. is silent on the point, but speaks of the handsomest dancing girls in the palace being ordered to be transferred to his harem.

and diamonds and pearls now dug out were so rare and precious that when Ghulām Qādir asked the Delhi jewellers to value them, they confessed that they had never before seen anything of such high value and could make no guess at their prices, nor could a single purchaser for them be found nowadays. The total spoils of Delhi, in cash and kind, were estimated by his own wife at twenty-five *krors** of Rupees [*Ibr.* iii. 175], and some more coins and jewels were found by Rana Khan and the palace servants among the *debris* left behind by his excavations. The champion of crescentade against the *Kafirs* from the South, removed the gold coating of one cupola of the Jāmi' Masjid and sold it, but was prevented from similarly stripping the remainder by Maniyār Singh who warned him that such an outrage on the holy edifice would rouse the entire city population in arms against him. [*Ibr.* 158.]

§ 10. *Ismail Beg's policy and conduct: condition of Delhi city, Aug.-Sept., 1788.*

What was Ismail Beg Hamadāni doing while the drunken Ruhela was thus rioting in the palace? Their contract was that the spoils should be shared between them, one-third going to the Mughalia leader and two-thirds to the Ruhela Chieftain. When Shah Alam was deposed on 31st July and ill-treated, Ismail Beg remonstrated with

* A more sober estimate is fifteen lakhs in cash, besides rich clothing and furniture for which there was no market.

his colleague, but in vain. When nothing was paid to him out of the plunder of Delhi palace which had now begun, Hamadāni left Ghulām Qādir in anger and encamped in a distant quarter of the city. His ally's attempts to conciliate him failed, as Ghulām Qādir would not give him his full share, but offered small sums only. Henceforth there was an armed neutrality between the two new lords of Delhi, the wards and gates of the city being divided between them, while Ghulām Qādir alone occupied the fort. At one visit paid by the Ruhela to Ismail, the Mughalia officers tried to seize him and hold him to ransom for their master's dues, but Ghulām Qādir was saved by his sepoy commandant Maniyār Singh who formed a square round the Afghan's person. [*Ibr.* 163.] At last on 25th September, he sent to Ismail Beg Rs. 40,000 out of the spoliation of the *nāzir,* a ridiculously small sum when compared with his gains from the palace hoards.*

For nearly two months the city of Delhi lay a divided realm at the mercy of the Afghans and Mughalias, who often came to blows in the streets in the act of plunder. In these encounters, the Ruhelas were worsted, because the Mughalias had many friends and fellow-clansmen among the

* Rupture with Ismail Beg.—*DC. Ibr.* iii. 141-143, 163—167. *DY.* i. 313. At the end of September Sindhia agreed to give Ismail Beg 1½ lakhs of Rs. in cash and the fief of Rewāri which was to be wrested from Najaf Quli, *DY.* i. 342; 339 (or Ghausgarh.)

resident population and traders of Delhi, where the Afghans were always unpopular. But utter want of money and scarcity of provisions made Ismail Beg's position very unsafe; his starving soldiers at last began to leave him and go over to the Marathas. Finally, when near the end of September the Marathas began a new offensive against Delhi, Ismail Beg made a pact with Sindhia and joined the forces of Rānā Khān openly (28th Sept.) in attacking the Ruhelas then holding the city and fort. On the 7th of October he was sent away by Sindhia's orders to attack Najaf Quli in Rewāri.

§ 11. *Rānā Khān reconquers Delhi city and fort, 2—11 October, 1788.*

This brings us to the Maratha reconquest of Delhi. We have already seen that the small body of Maratha horse sent by Mahadji on 8th July from Mathurā to Delhi had failed to stem Ghulām Qādir's entrance into the capital and had therefore fallen back to Faridabad along with Himmat Bahadur who was now a servant of the Emperor (14th July.) Two months passed away before Sindhia was in a position to strengthen this detachment. But during this interval Deccani horsemen crossed over to the eastern side of the Jamunā and by plundering the grain caravans seriously affected the food supply of Delhi, [19th Aug. *DC*.]

At last, on 14th September Sindhia sent off a large force under his best general, Rānā Khān, to Delhi,* who was followed about twelve days later by another division under Jivā Dādā Bakhshi. His failure to clear the arrears of his men's pay delayed their start and progress. But they were "persuaded" by their generals, and at last arrived at Faridabad, and after confirming their pact with Ismail Beg began their attack on the Ruhelas. On 28th September they occupied Old Delhi, immediately south of Shah Jahan's city. Thence they advanced into the capital and occupied it on 2nd October. After some skirmishing, all the Ruhela troops were driven into the palace-fort, against which the Marathas with Ismail Beg and Begam Samru on their side opened fire from their trenches. [*DY*. i. 344.]

Ghulām Qādir could no longer maintain himself in the fort, especially as his troops there were starving from the effective Maratha raids in the Doab. So, he began to cross his booty, baggage and army over the river by way of Salimgarh, *en route* to Ghausgarh, but still kept a garrison of his own in the palace. His treasure convoy on the way to his home was looted by the Sikhs and Gujars in concert with the Marathas who had now entered the upper Doab in large numbers and helped to "make the country from

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* Maratha reconquest of Delhi.—*Ibr*. iii. 170-172. *DC. PRC*. i, 234—236, 243. Sat. i. 156. *Aiti Patravyav*. 266. *DY*. i. 320, 324, 325, 338. 342, 344, 315. *HP*. 538.

Ghausgarh to the northern hills a lampless desolation". He was now compelled to hasten to the eastern bank in defence of his own estates. The Maratha horse, who were without any artillery or disciplined musketeers, were easily driven back whenever they met him in the open. For some days Ghulām Qādir continued to revisit the fort of Delhi and make a parting extortion by beating Bidār Bakht, Prince Akbar, and even the half-dead Shah Alam, and carrying away some sons of Shah Alam as well as Bidar Bakht as his prisoners.

Meantime the exchange of fire between the depleted starving Ruhela garrison within the fort and the Marathas in their trenches outside continued. On 10th October, on the eve of the martyrdom of Imām Husain at Karbāla, while Ghulām Qādir was still in the fort, a powder-magazine there blew up through the negligence of some Ruhela soldiers who were issuing munitions from it. The effect was like that of a volcanic eruption and the ruins were flung down to the middle of the city. Ghulām Qādir read the omen and said, "Now the fort itself refuses to keep me". Taking his remaining property and latest booty with him, he vacated the fort with all his men, by means of boats. That morning grain had sold at two seers for a Rupee within the palace, and next day absolutely no food-stuff could be had there for love or money.

On the following morning (11th October), while Rānā Khan was issuing his orders for the day's fight, the fort ramparts looked silent and deserted. Some of the captive princes whose rooms had been locked from the outside by Ghulām Qādir, cried out to the Maratha scouts under the walls that the fort had been vacated. Then Himmat Bahadur entered it after sending a man up to the battlement by means of a rope-ladder to open the gate from the inside. The Marathas entered later under Ravloji Sindhia. The most pressing needs of the half-dead Shah Alam were food and water, and these were at once supplied. The numerous princes and princesses and their servants were equally starving, and Rānā Khan sent them huge quantities of cooked meals. Barbers were sent in to pare nails and trim beards which had been left unattended to for two months and a half.

There was some days' delay in Rānā Khan himself waiting on the Emperor. As Sindhia's representative, he had to come to a clear understanding with Shah Alam, and he had also to take full control of that large lawless and utterly convulsed capital and establish Sindhia's authority over it, as a measure of safety. The traitor's followers and secret partisans had to be hunted down, and every piece of spoil taken from the royal family and still kept in the city had to be traced and restored. This respite helped the Emperor to revive.

On the 16th of October, Rāṇā Khan with his leading officers, interviewed the sightless Sovereign and gave him what consolation was possible in his unfathomable misery. Next day, which was a Friday, he had the *khutba* read in the name of Shah Alam II again from the pulpit of the Jāmi Masjid. The flag of Sindhia again floated over Delhi city and was to continue there without a break till thirteen years later, when the banner of St. George took its place.

§ 12. *The hunting down of Ghulām Qādir, Nov.—Dec. 1788.*

After the monotonous tale of warfare in diverse theatres for the preceding sixteen months, it is not necessary to narrate the story of the hunting down of Ghulām Qādir in detail. This campaign had nothing of interest or importance in its course. It will be enough to give it in outline. From the beginning of October, Mahadji Sindhia had been sending all available boats from Agra to Delhi to enable his troops to cross over into the Doab on the heels of Ghulām Qādir. Rāyāji Pātil had already moved up the Doab from the south, crossed the Hindan and cut off provisions from the Ruhela Chief's army. With him was Devji Gāvlé. But their Deccani light horse could not stand up to Ghulām Qādir's artillery and French-led musketeers in pitched battle ; they were outclassed in arms and severely beaten, Devji himself being wounded, [12th Oct.

Ibr. iii. 173.] Their appeal for help reached Sindhia, who sent Jivā Dādā and Totā Firingi across from Delhi with more troops.*

On 3rd November Rānā Khān himself followed them and was joined by Begam Samru's full contingent, his own delay being again due to the clamours of his unpaid soldiery. Rāyāji Pātil and other Deccani sardars had about 8,000 men under them. In addition, 22 guns and 8,000 more men of the Jat Rajah crossed the Jamuna near Shergarh and moved up the Doab to join Rāyāji. Rānā Khan now arrived with 20,000 men and took the lead in the chase. In a few weeks a further addition was made to the hunt. Ali Bahadur, at the head of the contingent furnished by the Peshwa's Government, had at long last arrived at Mahadji's side at Mathurā (6th November.) On the 17th of the month he was detached against Ghulām Qādir.

Ghulām Qādir, after abandoning Delhi fort (10th October), at first closed the ferries over the Jamunā for twenty miles on the opposite bank to which he had removed his army. But the vast number of the Marathas enabled them to cross over below and above the guarded points in successive bodies and to rove round the Ruhela camp at a distance, cutting off its supplies so

* The hunting down of G. Q.—*Ibr.* iii. 173, 183-193. *DC. PRC.* i. 238-244. *DY.* i. 324, 343, 344, 354, 359, 362-368. *HP.* 539-540, 549-556. *Sat.* i. 161-166. *Aiti Pat. Vyav.* 267, 273-275. Death, *DY.* 372, 378. *MD.* ii. 173. *Ibr.* 191-193.

effectively that scarcity of food was as acute in it as during their occupation of Delhi. On the 20th of the month a stunning blow fell on him: his great fortress and storehouse of Aligarh opened its gates to the Marathas. The Ruhela in despair turned southwards and moved from place to place without any plan and fighting the Marathas without any decisive result except suffering the loss of men and horses which he could ill afford to bear. At last about the 4th of November he took refuge in Mirat fort, which the Marathas invested. Their strength was further increased by the coming of Ali Bahadur (11th Dec.) and the blockade was made very stringent. Utter want of food and close confinement worked havoc among the crowded multitude of the besieged. Men and beasts died in hundreds and their corpses poisoned the air. Ghulām Qādir now offered to release the captive princes in return for a free pardon and the guarantee of his patrimony, but the negotiations failed. Then he tried to massacre the helpless Delhi royal family still in his hands, but was prevented from this last infamy by Maniyār Singh at the risk of his life from the drawn sword of his infuriated master.

At last, the position within beleaguered fort became utterly intolerable. On 17th December, after leaving a strong force under Maniyār Singh in the Suraj Kund suburb to keep the Marathas engaged, Ghulām Qādir slipped out of the fort

with a party of 500 horsemen at night and sought to gain the road to Ghausgarh. A short distance outside he fell in with a Maratha patrol under Jivā Dādā, which fought and pursued him up to midnight, destroying half his escort. When the pursuers halted, Ghulām Qādir, who had concealed himself in a hollow, resumed his flight. In the darkness the fugitives separated; Ghulām Qādir missed his path and his comrades and rode on alone. At last his horse stumbled into a hole and broke its leg. The Ruhela chief continued the journey limping on foot. The dawn revealed a village in front of him; it was Bamnauli,* three miles south-west of Shāmli. He had covered some forty miles in his flight, but in the north-western direction instead of turning to the east for his home. In this village he took shelter in the house of a Brahman,—"probably a sufferer from his former raids," as Khair-ud-din suggests, —and offered the man rewards for supplying him with a pony and a guide to Ghausgarh. The Brahman conveyed the intelligence to Ali Bahadur whose camp lay in the way, and a party of Marathas arrived and took the Ruhela chief prisoner (19th December.)

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* *DY*. i. 359 names it *Zādigāon*, but *PRC*. i. 241 calls it *Bamnauli* (which is my correction for *Ramnauti*, a copyist's error.) All the authorities agree that it was a few miles short of Shamli (*HP*. 555.) This rules out the more famous and much larger *Bamnauli*, 24 m. n.w. of Mirat. Shamli is 22 m. due east of Panipat, & 22 m. n. of the latter Bamnauli.

Meantime, in the night of the 17th, as soon as the flight of Ghulām Qādir became known, most of his followers fled away from Mirat abandoning everything. Next morning Rānā Khan entered the city, released the captive princes, took charge of all the property found there on behalf of the Emperor, and arrested *nāzir* Manzur Ali and his Hindu satellites, as well as Maniyār Singh who had continued fighting from a house. Three thousand Ruhelas, found in the fort, were stripped of their arms and clothing and driven out with blows. Ghulām Qādir and the other prisoners were sent to Mahadji at Mathura, where they arrived on the last day of the year 1788. At first they were plied with choice food and clothing in order to induce them to reveal the hiding places of the recent spoils of Delhi. But their answer was evasive. On 28th February Mahadji received a letter from Shah Alam threatening to abdicate and go away to Mecca rather than see his tormentor spared for the sake of money. So, the Ruhela monster and his patron, the arch-traitor Manzur Ali, were done to death (2nd-4th March 1789) by tortures which were a faint echo of what they had done at Delhi. Ghulām Qādir's eye-balls were, by command, sent to the imperial master whom he had wronged so grievously. His body also was to have been sent to Delhi for public exposure, but according to popular belief his infernal lord took it away. Khair-ud-din tells a gruesome tale

of how, when his headless trunk was hung upside down from a tree, a black dog with white rings round its eyes sat below it and lapped up the blood dripping from the neck, returning to its horrid meal again and again though driven away with stones, and that after two days both corpse and dog disappeared, never to be seen again by any human eye!

With this weird and ghastly scene the most tragic drama in the history of the Timurid sovereigns of India closes.

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